



THE NOE VALLEY VOICE

VOL. XX, NO. 7 • AUGUST 1996

Summer Literary Issue



Tree Ferns

PAMELA GERARD

1996 Literary Contest Winners

Non-Fiction

- First Place* His Own Hand *Mim Locke* 3
Second Place False Positive *Barbara Lewis* 7
Third Place Trolleyman With Cut Leg *Delta O'Hara* 9
Honorable Mention Don't Look Down *E. Eastman* 14
Honorable Mention Naked God *John Horan* 15
Honorable Mention Mavis' Back Yard *Eileen Malone* 16

Fiction

- First Place* Playgrounds *C. E. Shue* 4
Second Place A Little Arc *Bill Carty* 6
Third Place Telling Stories *Stephanie Rapp* 8
Honorable Mention Miss Ford's Fan Club *Rayne Reynolds* 10

- Honorable Mention* That Night I Had a Dream *John Teall* 11
Honorable Mention Wild Heart *Andrea N. Rubin* 12
Honorable Mention Happiness *Al Ujcic* 17

Poetry

- First Place* Boxcar at the Holocaust Museum *Susan Terris* 5
Second Place To a Don Juan *Zack Rogow* 6
Third Place Forbidden Fruit *Barbara Lewis* 8
Honorable Mention Piglet Mind *Paul Watsky* 10
Honorable Mention Human Remains *Jane Ellen Rubin* 13
Honorable Mention The Therapeutic Hour *Nancy Sully* 14
Honorable Mention TV *Mary L. R. Johnson* 15
Honorable Mention Story With No Words *Linda Elkin* 16

Special advertising section begins on page 19.

Inspired Writing

The Noe Valley Voice received more than 250 entries in our 1996 Literary Contest—all with heartstrings attached. This year's stories, poems, and essays were particularly touching, and covered the emotional spectrum from humorous anecdotes on raising kids to moving tributes to mentors and loved ones who had died. The judges in the fiction and non-fiction categories were *Voice* writers Jim Christie, Denise Minor, and Jane Underwood. Poet Steve Bosque and *Voice* co-publishers Sally Smith and Jack Tipple read the poems and passionately traded their favorites. Readers also included neighbors and colleagues, family and friends—anyone willing to "listen to this!" Thanks also to the Noe Valley merchants who contributed gift certificates to this year's prize money: Jim Carroll of Carroll's Books; Nicky Salan, proprietor of Cover to Cover Booksellers; and Kate Rosenberger, owner of Phoenix Books and Records. The *Voice* appreciates their support, and that of the hundreds of advertisers who grace the pages of the *Summer Literary Issue* as well as our regular news edition. We know this literary venture would not exist without them, nor would it thrive without you, dear reader (and writer). To celebrate its publication, please join us at a reading and reception for the winning writers on Friday, Aug. 9, starting at 7:30 p.m., at Carroll's Books, 1193 Church St. We hope you are as inspired as we were.

—Sally Smith and Jack Tipple

LITERARY ISSUE CONTRIBUTORS

Fiction

Bill Carty, "A Little Arc," Second Place

Originally from Connecticut, Bill Carty is a visual artist and writer who has lived in the Mission District for 20 years. "A Little Arc" is part of a work-in-progress, a string of interweaving vignettes about the life of a neighborhood. Mr. Carty also writes music reviews for *Front Row Critics Circle*.

Stephanie Rapp, "Telling Stories," Third Place

Born in Brooklyn and raised with her twin sister in Springville, N.Y., Stephanie Rapp moved to San Francisco in 1983. She is a consultant specializing in international nonprofits and was director of the United Nations' 50th birthday celebration in San Francisco last year. She completed her master's thesis in creative writing at San Francisco State University in July, "just under the seven-year limit."

Rayne Reynolds, "Miss Ford's Fan Club," Honorable Mention

Native San Franciscan Rayne Reynolds is a self-described scooter girl and working stiff. She is currently finishing *Never Buy Socks in a Bar*, a memoir of her heatnik printer dad's battle with cancer, and *Cooper's Last Stand*, a screenplay about a shoeshine man caught up in a spur-of-the-moment bank robbery. "Miss Ford's Fan Club" was inspired by a conversation with an old friend that forced her to confess a secret fascination with obituaries, "those damnable square inches of print that are supposed to sum up an entire life."

Andrea N. Rubin, "Wild Heart," Honorable Mention

Richmond District resident Andrea Rubin was born and raised in Wickford, R.I. She graduated from Middlebury College in Vermont with a degree in Russian, and has been writing short stories since she was a young girl. This is Ms. Rubin's first published work since a story that appeared in Middlebury's literary review during her college years. Although a resident of San Francisco for seven years, she still considers herself "a New England girl at heart."

C. E. Shue, "Playgrounds," First Place

C. E. Shue lives in Noe Valley with her husband and 12-month-old daughter, Allie. Ms. Shue has a B.A. in journalism from the University of Southern California, and has been writing short stories for 10 years. Her first job was "slinging orange juice at Disneyland," but she has also worked as a bookstore buyer and a marketing coordinator for a San Francisco publisher. Her stories have appeared in various literary magazines, including *Kingfisher* and *The Short Story Review*. She writes on Thursdays, the one day a week Allie is at day care.

John Teall, "That Night I Had a Dream," Honorable Mention

Writer John Teall grew up in San Diego and now lives in the Mission District.

Al Ujcic, "Happiness," Honorable Mention

Al Ujcic is a writer and artist living in upper Noe Valley. He is a graduate of U.C. Berkeley, and a past winner of a Phelan Award for non-fiction prose. His family is originally from Croatia, which he plans to visit this fall. An article of his on Dubrovnik was published by *The San Francisco Examiner*. A collection of his watercolor paintings is currently on display at Mavericks Coffee House on Chenery Street.

Non-Fiction

E. Eastman, "Don't Look Down," Honorable Mention

Noe Valley resident E. Eastman has been a physical therapist for 22 years for UCSF—Mt. Zion Home Care Agency. For generations, the first sons in his family had been named "Ellery Eastman." E.'s father, disliking his first name, broke with tradition by naming his son simply "E." Mr. Eastman has just completed a children's picture book called *Bumblelina*, about an overweight bumble bee, which he is submitting to publishers.

John Horan, "Naked God," Honorable Mention

John Horan lives in Walnut Creek with his wife, Michelle, and their two daughters, 7-year-old Megan and 2-year-old Natalie. He was inspired to begin writing in 1985 while helping a poet friend edit poetry. When he tried "Naked God" out on his San Francisco writers group, the members laughed so hard they urged him to take it on the road. The piece is his first published work.

Barbara Lewis, "False Positive," Second Place

Barbara Lewis is an editor for *PC World* magazine. She also "walks tightropes, builds bridges, and serves as a simultaneous interpreter" in the Noe Valley home she shares with her husband, Bob, and their two dachshunds, Suzy and Abba. The winner of two prizes this year (she also won third place in poetry for "Forbidden Fruit"), Barbara Lewis says next year she's "going for the gold in the Exquisitely Sensitive Lightly Disguised Autobiographical Fiction category."

Mim Locke, "His Own Hand," First Place

Mim Locke lives and works at the Martin de Porres soup kitchen in the Mission District. She reveals that on Jan. 1, 1994, having perfected her recipe for 20 gallons of oatmeal, she made the decision to set aside one day a week for writing. "The 'some day' that I was going to begin writing had finally arrived."

Eileen Malone, "Mavis' Back Yard," Honorable Mention

Colma resident Eileen Malone considers herself primarily a poet, although she continues to achieve success as a non-fiction writer. Her book, *The Complete Guide to Writers' Groups, Workshops and Conferences*, was published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., this summer. She will be interviewed by America Online in the writers' chat room on Aug. 6, 6 to 7 p.m.

Delta O'Hara, "Trolleyman With Cut Leg," Third Place

Delta O'Hara's chapbook titled *Cabaret Noir* was recently published by Zeitegeist Press in Berkeley. In San Francisco it is available at Modern Times Bookstore on Valencia Street and Bound Together Book Collective on Haight Street. In addition to being a writer, Ms. O'Hara is a singer in search of a cabaret piano player.

Poetry

Linda Elkin, "Story With No Words," Honorable Mention

Glen Park resident Linda Elkin is the co-founder of Writing Circles For Women, and has been teaching writing classes in San Francisco and the East Bay since 1991. She was also an Isadora Duncan dancer for 20 years, and has lived in San Francisco since 1978. Two of Ms. Elkin's poems have recently been accepted for publication, one in the *Santa Fe Sun* newspaper, and another in *Spillway*, a Los Angeles poetry magazine.

Mary L. R. Johnson, "TV," Honorable Mention

Mary Johnson lives and writes poetry in Taos, N.M. She resided in San Francisco from 1963 to 1971, and again from 1978 to 1980. But she fell in love with Taos while on vacation in 1953, and knew then that she would one day settle there. Her poetry collection titled *Comets and Carnations* was published in 1989, and she has had poems included in both a New Mexico poetry anthology and a national poetry anthology. She is currently working on a memoir.

Barbara Lewis, "Forbidden Fruit," Third Place

Barbara Lewis is a winner in both the poetry and non-fiction categories this year. A brief biography appears in the non-fiction section.

Zack Rogow, "To a Don Juan," Second Place

Zack Rogow is an editor and teacher in the School of Education at U.C. Berkeley. He and his wife, Anne Sachs, have two daughters and have lived in Noe Valley for nine years. Mr. Rogow's translation of the George Sand novel *Horace* was published in 1995. BABRA, the Bay Area Book Reviewers Association, gave him a special award in 1996 for his translation work.

1996 Voice Reading and Reception

Come congratulate the writers at a reception and reading of the winning poetry, fiction, and non-fiction in our 1996 Literary Contest

Friday, August 9, 7:30 p.m.

Carroll's Books, 1193 Church Street at 24th
647-3020

Neighborhood residents and merchants, and all Voice contributors—
past, present, and future—are invited to attend.

The Noe Valley Voice—Your Neighborhood Newspaper Since 1977
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The August 1996 edition is the second annual *Summer Literary Issue*, featuring the top-winning fiction, essays, and poetry in our 1996 Literary Contest. For future issues, the *Voice* welcomes your letters, story ideas, and manuscripts, including news, essays, poetry, and fiction. All such items should include your name, address, and phone number, and may be edited for brevity or clarity. (Unsigned letters to the editor will not be considered for publication.) Unsolicited contributions will be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Jane Ellen Rubin, "Human Remains," Honorable Mention

Lifelong New Yorker Jane Ellen Rubin moved to San Francisco a year ago, after accepting a position as executive director of the San Francisco Ethics Commission. She loves New York but finds San Francisco "friendlier and easier to navigate." Ms. Rubin is a longtime writer of fiction, essays, and poetry, and her works have appeared in several literary magazines. She laughingly refers to herself as "a bureaucrat by day and poet by night."

Nancy Sully, "The Therapeutic Hour," Honorable Mention

Nancy Sully, who lives and works in Palo Alto, says she "inserted the word 'poetry' for 'children' some years ago when the latter grew up and moved away." Ms. Sully has published poems in numerous journals, including *Malahat Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Matrix*, *Crone Chronicles*, and *Convolvulus*.

Susan Terris, "Boxcar at the Holocaust Museum," First Place

San Francisco resident Susan Terris has been writing fiction and poetry for 20 years. Her recent works include *Author! Author!* and *Nell's Quilt*, both by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, and *Killing in the Comfort Zone*, published by Pudding House Press. Ms. Terris' poetry has appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *Calyx*, *Iowa Woman*, *Poet & Critic*, and *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, among other journals and publications. She is currently completing a poetry collection titled *Wedges of Parallel Time*.

Paul Watsky, "Piglet Mind," Honorable Mention

A San Francisco resident since 1979, Paul Watsky is a clinical psychologist specializing in Jungian analysis. He also has a Ph.D. in English literature from the State University of Buffalo, and taught for five years in the English Department at San Francisco State. Dr. Watsky says he became his own analyst four years ago to overcome a creative block. He has been writing regularly ever since. His poetry has appeared recently in *The Cream City Review* and *Modern Haiku*.

His Own Hand

Mim Locke

MY FATHER'S script is buoyant. The tops of *l's*, *t's*, and *d's* balloon up to the horizon beyond. *G's*, *j's*, and *y's*, as well as the more sedate *p's* and *f's*, swoop down and lasso the letters below. All the remaining letters, the vowels and stemless consonants, provide a uniform wavy sea for the elliptical diving whales and the sloops in full sail on its surface running before a southeasterly breeze. There are straight lines, too, ruler straight. Long slashing muskets aimed from *t* to *t* at point-blank range over the crests of the waves. I find his handwriting pleasing to look at but at times unreadable. A full page of it puts me in mind of a tapestry or needle-point, of things stitched over.

I have two samples here beside me. The first, dated May 2, 1943, fills half of a dull green canvas-bound log book

with lecture notes from Navy Intelligence School. The opening words are *Radar Theory and Equipment*. The second sample is a poorly xeroxed copy of a note written on November 19, 1980. Its last words, the last he ever wrote, are *P.S. I did remember to water your flowers*. Both phrases could have been written on the very same day. I can detect no change in the hand.

There should be a difference. So much had changed. I scrutinize the pages like a detective searching for clues. I could understand better if, in the later one, the upper loops had deflated, like dreams empty of hope, or if the lower ones had tightened like nooses. But I am trying too hard. They are identical.

I love you! I'm reading backwards from the end of the final note. The lines are sure, not shaky. How can this be? *But for you I would not have made it this far* is, if anything, a little bolder, less cramped than *Receiver is wired into the upper vertical deflector plate*, written 37 years earlier by a young man preparing for war.

Shouldn't those parting words carry within them the shape of his despair? This must not be, for their shapes are round and full, the weather still fair.

I continue reading the note in reverse, comparing it to the log, sleuthing for hidden indications of guilt or pain. *I could live with you forever but not with myself any longer* differs in no perceivable way from *Radar picks up many types of false contacts, e.g., white-caps upwind look much like a ship contact but will always maintain position no matter how much you change course and speed*.

He was good at hiding things. Only we who were close to him had any inkling of his torment, his drinking, his dark moods. From his writing alone one could easily judge him to be a sensual, open, gregarious man. He wasn't, although he worked hard at giving that impression. I had always thought handwriting was supposed to reveal things about us that we were incapable of hiding, but I'm not so sure anymore.

My father did some unthinkable things in his life—things that puzzle me far more than the immutability of his handwriting but which add immeasurably to its mystery. Shouldn't

I have two samples here beside me. The first, dated May 2, 1943, fills half of a dull green canvas-bound log book with lecture notes from Navy Intelligence School. The second is a poorly xeroxed copy of a note written on November 19, 1980. Its last words are "P.S. I did remember to water your flowers."

the choices a person makes change the shape of his words? Like the lines knit into our aging faces, shouldn't the letters we form to say goodbye reflect the way we met the world? Or, like the white-caps in my father's war notes, do they always maintain their shape no matter how we change? Perhaps the answer is that he never changed, he just acquired more things to hide.

Using all these standards and a well-trained crew, firing should occur five seconds after 'fire when ready.'

I wish it could be otherwise.

Sweetheart

Photographs

The photos on the front cover and throughout the literary pages of this edition of the *Noe Valley Voice* are by Noe Valley photographer Pamela Gerard. They have been drawn from three series, titled Religious Icons, Mysterious Landscapes, and Childhood Memories. Pamela is currently at work on a series called Double Happiness.



Old Grave

PAMELA GERARD

Playgrounds

C. E. Shue

THE PLAYGROUND IS empty today because of the rain. It is the first rain of the season and it has come with a vengeance—thunder, lightning; the works. The water, relentless, threatens to flood the playground swimming pool as well as the basketball court and baseball field. The swings rust and the jungle gym is bare, deserted by the children like trees deserted by their leaves in winter.

The rain has driven everyone indoors, including my roommate, Peter. He is in the living room making a "pretty little village." The "pretty little village" is a cut-out, fold-along-the-dotted-lines, paste-up book that he bought at a museum. Peter goes to a lot of museums. He works at a bookstore. "I like places where I can see things," he says.

Peter holds the book up for me to see. It has an old-fashioned drawing of two rosy-cheeked, golden-haired children playing with a completed village. "Pretty neat, huh?" Peter inquires.

"Huh," I reply. "Where are you going to put it?"

"Those empty shelves," he answers, gesturing behind him. "I thought it would look nice there." All Peter's building materials—Elmer's glue, school scissors, damp sponge, newspaper—are neatly arranged on the table within easy reach.

"In the living room," I say slowly, hoping I'm wrong. "In the living room where people can see it."

The table Peter is working on wobbles every time thunder rolls through the apartment. This is because the walls are thin and the table isn't really a table at all, but a door he has attached legs to. It is nice and long, but dangerous to put a full cup of coffee on.

"Well yeah, John," Peter says irritably. "That's the whole point—to be able to see it." Peter has bushy brown hair and light green eyes that tend to look through things. He looks through me for a moment, then goes back to the house he is working on.

I frown and look out the rain-spattered window at the playground across the street. I'm not sure I like the idea of a village on my shelves, no matter how pretty. An old man in a blue wool shirt and no hat wades across the basketball court. The rain pelts him like insults. Two pairs of black hightops and a pair of work boots have been lynched on the tangle of power lines that cut across the sky.

I decide to reserve judgment on the village.

IT TAKES HIM a few days to finish the village, but it is worth it, even I have to admit.

"Here on Main Street, we'll have the Church, the Fire Station, the School House, and the Mercantile," Peter says, lining them up in a semicircle. He puts several traditional houses in a residential area on the top two shelves and the Wrong Side of the Tracks (Boarding House, Saloon) on the lowest shelf.

"There," he says, adjusting the Boarding House. "The itinerant workers and traveling salesmen can stay here and go to the Saloon for whiskey and poker. I would have made a great urban planner."

The rain shows no sign of letting up. The playground sandbox has turned into a pit of quicksand, ready to swallow up any stray cats slinking about in the wet weather.

The grayness of the skies has dripped into everything like some insidious fungus. Fire escapes stitch the buildings together. "Okay," I concede. "The village can stay."

Peter looks at me as though this were a foregone conclusion.

One good thing about the rain is that the gang that usually hangs out at the playground has had to congregate elsewhere. When we first moved in, they would stand across the street and stare at us whenever we went in or out. "Too many white folk comin' in," they would comment as we got into my beat-up Volkswagen. Peter wouldn't say a word as I dropped him off at the bookstore on my way to school.

At first I couldn't sleep because I could hear them talking and laughing outside my bedroom window late into the night. The little girl next door told me that they had caught a fag on their turf once. They tied him up, she said, then threw him into the pool at the playground. I couldn't sleep for wondering if the laughter I heard each night was the same laughter the man heard as he tried to keep his head above water. Maybe the story was just that, a story, but I couldn't tell.

After a while I got used to the sound of their voices. It became a background noise, a lullaby to fall asleep to each night.

THE NEXT DAY Peter comes home with another book. "What is it this time?" I ask. I am making macaroni and cheese for dinner. Generic.

Peter peers into the pot and makes a face.

"Dinosaur dioramas," he says.

"What?"

"Dinosaur dioramas," he repeats.

"Two, in fact. One for the Jurassic Period and one for the Cretaceous Period."

I am afraid to ask the next question, but I do anyway. "Where are the dinosaurs going to live?"

Peter opens the refrigerator and takes out a package of baloney and wheat bread. "In the village. It's too empty." He rolls a piece of meat and takes a bite of bread.

"What about people?" I suggest.

"What about them?" From the tone of his voice I know that Peter has considered having people in his village and rejected the idea as inappropriate. He sits on the door/table placidly eating his baloney and bread, always separately. Then he makes himself a cup of instant coffee, forgets about the wobble, wipes the spill up with his sponge. He sits down, ready to work on his dinosaurs. The pot of macaroni boils over onto the stove.

The rain continues. The radio says that people are sandbagging their houses by the shore. The bridge is closed, causing a long commute. The baseball field at the playground is flooded with a foot of water.

Peter mentions that we should stock the field with goldfish.

*At first I couldn't sleep
because I could hear them
talking and laughing
outside my bedroom
window late into the
night. The little girl next
door told me that they
had caught a fag on
their turf once.*

The couple next door are having another fight. We can hear them quite clearly, sharing a common wall as we do. "Slut!" the husband yells. He is a junkie, but he's very cordial when I see him on the stairwell. He always says hello and puts my newspaper on the doorstep so no one will steal it. "You goddam whore!"

The floor quivers from their pounding feet. What are they doing, chasing each other around over there? "I can't take it anymore! I can't!" The woman's voice is high and eerie. It rises to storm-pitch. "Stop it! Give me the car keys, I'm getting out of here! Don't you..."

"Not until you..."

The sound of shattering glass and the howl of wind drowns out his voice. A door slams and it is silent.

"Lord," Peter mutters, cutting out an Allosaurus.

The next day I have to step over the shards of broken glass on my way to school. The manager has traveled across town to put in a new window. I don't know who called him. "Musta been the storm," he says pleasantly. His hair is sandy and his

skin looks much too healthy for this kind of weather. I just nod, smile, and continue down the stairs.

Peter is delighted with the dinosaurs. He puts the plant eaters on Main Street and sets the carnivores loose in the residential district. I think he's perverse and I tell him so.

"Nature overtakes Civilization!" he declares.

"I think you've got it backwards..."

"Gnd emulates Man! Life imitates Art! Time marches backward! Hallelujah!"

Peter's creations flood our apartment. The Emerald City of Oz sits under the table next to a medieval village and a Chinese commune. The Taj Mahal graces the toilet tank and the Space Shuttle flies into anyone coming through the front door. An elegant Japanese pagoda holds a position on the linen cabinet and the Capitol Building presides over the television. A miniature Kremlin sits on the coffee table. A catapult that really works is aimed at the back door.

The little girl next door spends an increasing amount of time at our place. I don't think she ever goes to school. She likes to watch Peter build things. He offers to let her help, but she rarely does. She has limp brown hair and an unsettling, hard look to her dark eyes, even when she smiles. Her name is Dolores, but Peter and I call her Doc. She never talks about playing with other children. But she does like my macaroni and cheese.

AND STILL THE RAIN FALLS. Almost three weeks and we haven't seen the sun. Peter makes paper models of Columbus's three ships, the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. "Maybe I'll make the Titanic next," he laughs.

Doe knocks on our door, breathless with the news that a bike has been stolen from the people downstairs. "They know who did it," she says with as much enthusiasm as I've ever seen in her. "They know and I know too."

"Aren't they going to call the police?" I ask.

"Oh no. They're gonna give 'em a chance to give the bike back. And if they don't get it, they're going to beat the guy up."

"But they should let the police handle it," I insist. Doe looks at me, something close to contempt pulling at the corner of her mouth. Peter doesn't comment one way or the other.

"Some people think it was my brother," Doe goes on. "But it wasn't. He only breaks into cars and he wouldn't do it around here. I mean, he *lives* here!"

Peter's latest project is a paper globe. "If I can't go out to the world, I'm going to bring the world in to me," he says stubbornly.

Doe comes over a few days later, eats Campbell's tomato soup with me, and watches Peter build for a while. Then she tells me that the bike has been returned. "See?" she says smugly.

"That was fast," I reply. Justice is swift.

Then she has to go back to her own apartment. It's Sunday; the day Doe's mother makes her memorize prayers.

COME HOME and discover the door open. Maybe Peter is home early. I think. Or maybe he forgot to lock it. But no, in truth we have been robbed. Someone has forced the back door open. The catapult did no good without someone there to operate it. I wander through the apartment trying to figure out what has been taken. The stereo, of course. And the television, cheap as it was. No money—we didn't have any. The watch my father gave me. Peter's guitar. My bike. The place is a



Carnival Ride

PAMELA GERARD

Boxcar at the Holocaust Museum

Assaulted by brick and steel, my sister and I cross
the glass bridge between then and now, touch
Szumsk, the Polish town
our grandparents came from, walk into
Ejszyski Tower eyeing photo doppelgängers
of relatives we call the monkey aunts,
of an uncle who couldn't skate the '36 Olympics,
of our parents, ourselves.

My younger sister has married a Baptist, raised
children who don't believe they are Jews;
yet she—riveted—is moving snail's-pace.
So when I come upon it, I am alone.
It's an old red cattle car like those from
our Missouri childhood, counted as they
clacked by full of livestock
due for slaughter. But this one is different.
To avoid passing through, I pretend
to examine oxidized razors, forks,
tea strainers, then metal instruments
of torture which up-close
become umbrella frames. I check my watch,
consider flight...

...yet as I turn, I see my sister
by the boxcar unwilling to enter. *Why are
we here?* Hurrying toward her, I move past
cart, suitcases, hat boxes. *What will it tell us?*
For a moment, we are side by side, aware of
primal, physical comfort. Then together
we step in. It is dark. We do not
speak. After 50 years, stench still saturates
the boards. As I inhale it, I feel fingers
tug at the pleats of my skirt,
at my sweater, my hands. Sweaty heads
I can't see butt me, begging for refuge,
those who would not have been spared:
my children, my sister's Mischling children,
my own Mischling grandchildren.

Suddenly, a soprano voice echoes around us.
Choo-choo. Turning, we see a boy-child
havened between parents.
He smiles, nods sweetly, beckoning to us and to
the invisible hordes pressed close. *Choo-choo*,
he repeats. *Choo-choo*. *All aboard...*

Susan Terris

Playgrounds from page 4

disaster area, buildings strewn about as if
an earthquake had hit and me, a victim of
shock, wandering through the debris.

Peter arrives soon after and I relate
what I have discovered. "I'll call the po-
lice," I tell him.

"Wait a minute," Peter says. Then he
goes into the living room and looks at all
the buildings, the dinosaurs, the catapult.
He begins to pick them up, his eyes and
fingers lingering over each one.

"Should you be doing that?" I ask. "I
mean, won't it make it harder for the po-
lice to get fingerprints or whatever?"

Peter ignores me. After he has checked
to make sure everything is fixed, he sits on
the table. It rocks under his weight, which
is not much weight at all.

Then it hits me. "Doe will know who
did this," I say, picking up the receiver to
call her, even though she is right next door.

"No," Peter says, pushing the button,
cutting the connection. "Don't ask her.
Don't."

I look at him, surprised. "Don't you
want to know who did it? Don't you want
to get our stuff back?"

"We can replace all that stuff," he says.
He sits down to work on his latest toy, a
windmill that runs on solar power. "The
store sprung a leak," he continues. "I was
able to salvage some books from the kids'
section. I'm going to give them to Doe."

From across the street I can hear the
sound of a ball bouncing in deep water. A
small boy wearing a ski jacket, knit hat, and
mittens is shooting baskets in the rain. ♦



Shadows/Fence

PAMELA GERARD

A Little Arc

Bill Carty

WHEN ONLY A COO remains of the cacophony of the family day, his "little birds in their nests," Granpa repairs to his milk crate on the back stairwell by the roof, his little piece of personal territory. A cigar, a Bustelo coffee-can ashtray, a drink, looking west. West beyond the hills where the sky is different, over where the ocean is, ocean of travel and mystery, still unretired possibility. On the other side of the world his sun, a descending pink ribbon, stirs a small cat awake, as the first moonlight feathers Granpa's shoulders. He smiles to think how once the sun set only for him. Now the sky and ocean and the breathing night of sleep hold his children and theirs and the children of strangers.

From his solitary perch he can see the treetops and the church steeple pastelled by the waning sun and the moon's refrain. It is the same church and the same purple forever moonlight as when he first kissed his little Noelia as they lay in the hushed grass of the night cemetery so many years ago, among the cool chalky stones, hats spinning in the pines and the steeple above. The sky had been witness and participant in their innocent joining, before ceremonies or spoken vows, and had

been theirs, they felt, ever since. Though there had been few rockets in their sky, it remained beautiful without embellishments. When a newborn was taken from them one night, they had searched for sense of it in the placid face of the moon. Their faith told them there must be a reason and with the gradual turn of the earth they went on.

Today Granpa can see names on tombstones; he understands better the comings and the leavings that move like a breath, a tide, like the wheeling sky and his own journey. On that cemetery night long ago it seemed to them the universe breathed an endless ocean of blue pearly clouds while their shoulder blades drew them down, braided hands containing each other, a constellation, lying on the grassy crust between drowning and flight.

Now Granpa can almost sense Doña Noelia's breathing from their bed inside.

The last light of cigar in the enfolding darkness, glass teacup moon tipping west, he remembers how they had pulsed with discovery and release, no possibility but silence, turning through the Milky Way and no way to say it.

He smiles to think how once the sun set only for him. Now the sky and ocean and the breathing night of sleep hold his children and theirs and the children of strangers.

To a Don Juan

I can understand why you gravitate toward horizontal striped sweaters, why blond tresses thrill your nostrils with aromas you can't get out, why long brown legs in short blue shorts are more than you can ignore. Am I not, too, a mortal, oh Lysander? You bet!

I know the phenomenology of lust, the first time when the lamp jitters off the night table, and the sheer relief of finally admitting all that tenderness, then the second go-round under the blue morning with the strange clarity of new lenses, and next the maple syrup and the music tasting so sweet.

From time to time I counted those lovers like party-colored heads on a chain but each one was after all a dream of a life together, and the day came soon enough when I could no longer stand to see even one more woman sitting on the edge of the bed, weeping into fingers that remembered my shape.

Zack Rogow



Sad Bed

PAMELA GERARD

False Positive

Barbara Lewis

WHAT HAPPENS when you put yourself in the hands of the experts and find yourself in a comedy of horrors?

Exactly 20 years ago, in the mistaken belief I had cancer, a surgeon removed my left breast. This patchwork of reminiscences follows the strange twists life took after that event.

Coming To

The mound of bandages pressing on the left side of my chest provides my answer. But it feels nicely shaped, like a firm young breast. I am in no pain.

Unbeknownst to me, the surgeon has spoken with Bob, my husband. Things look very grave, so grave that any prognosis must await results of the microscopic examination. Dr. Watson, the pathologist who performed the frozen section, is completing his analysis. I wake to find Bob sitting next to me. Large tears roll down his cheeks. I cry in response. It still seems unreal, but I feel brave. I will be brave for both of us.

The surgeon appears in his white coat, tall and bespectacled, silver of hair, kindly of mien. "I am happy to be able to revise the earlier assessment," he says. What earlier assessment, I think. "What initially appeared as cancer in the lymph nodes is now identifiable as inflammation. The affected tissue was confined to a circumscribed area contained entirely within the breast. I believe we can now state with confidence that you are 99 percent home free." But what about the other 1 percent? Dr. Watson is reexamining the last of the tissue.

Through the warm haze of painkillers I am cheerful and endlessly noble. But at night come dreams of rage.

Everyone treats me with enormous kindness. It's not at all like the time in Michigan when I got drunk and broke my leg, and the hospital staff greeted me with unsmiling faces while ministering tenderly to the tiny ballerina in the next bed who'd been struck by a car. Hey, my leg hurt too. But now I am tended to with infinite concern. Friends and near-friends from decades past check in, wiring, calling, sending cards, flowers, and thoughtful gifts — a basket named Beauty Celebration full of scents and cosmetics. Even my father calls. Through the warm haze of painkillers I am cheerful and endlessly noble. But at night come dreams of rage.

White-Dog Dream

Xmastime at the office, work staff shrunk. We leftovers chat aimlessly, legs propped up on desks. Derald is going to Leslie's for dinner. "Is she a good cook?" "She'd BETTER be!" Through the door steps F. Scott Fitzgerald, immaculate in ensign's uniform. His eyes bulge slightly—I'd forgotten—Pekinese, repellent, moist with expectation. He stands silent, gentlemanly, hat shyly in hand. Omigod! He thinks I'm still his girl. Mea culpa! All mannerly, I escort him out to the parking lot, edgy, edgy,

stalling for time. A dog shrieks in the far corner of the lot. A man approaches from the right, holding two white hooves aloft in one hand. Behind him a white horse prances, no, a dog, a white Alsatian rearing up on hind legs, front paws severed. He staggers after a pickup truck he can't jump into, can't get the leverage to jump without front legs. It's his only chance for safety, but the truck can't wait.

Rise to Power

In sixth grade, mean fat Bob Koshgarian called me "big tit," a compound indignity since I was the only kid in class who still had to wear leggings and galoshes. By high school I felt bountiful rather than grotesque and enjoyed my changed status. The yearbook lists "best hody" and "homecoming queen" next to my name. Power, all unasked.

Later, after the birth of our second daughter, old friends of my husband came to dinner. They were also friends of his slender ex-wife, who persisted as a presence in our life. It was the early seventies, and I nursed Mandy at the table, innocently exposing a maternal breast that dwarfed my child's head. Conversation came to a halt, and I felt the glow of malicious satisfaction.

The Unveiling

The young dark-haired night nurse comes in, closes the door behind her. "Would you like a preview of what you're going to look like?" she offers kindly. "I've had the same surgery." Her entire chest is flat, board flat, but clean and smooth except for the scars, and muscled. A relief, of sorts. When my dressing is removed, I'm braced, although this time the half-flat chest is mine. It looks boyish and strong. I'm reminded of Dennis Franklin, the University of Michigan quarterback I saw bare-chested once in the infirmary. My right breast rides intact, but the image suffers in context.

From the Pathology Report

Specimen #2 consists of a breast simply amputated but including some axillary tissue. It weighs 602 gms. and measures 15x10x7.

The Sinking-Woman Dream

In the sinking car the water rises. Pressed against the window the woman gestures frantically. Would-be rescuers dive and dive. Help-is-on-the-way, they mime. Against the glass her open mouth makes soundless screams. They know, they know. Hang on! The rescuers bubble, must surface. Help is on the way.

Going Home

A cancer society volunteer provides a temporary prosthesis made of birdseed. It crunches in my bra, but at least I'm not asymmetrical for the return to the outside. It's much easier to be ambulatory in the hospital than recuperatory in a world of fast-moving children and dogs and a full-bodied husband. My noble cheeriness, so easy in the hospital, ebbs. Here I am with my half-flat chest. I head out to buy a birdseed replacement. In a display case in Macy's lingerie department, a jellyfish gleams. A sales associate fits me with a suitable size and advises baby powder before use.

What Dr. Watson Saw

I write Dr. Watson, asking about that remaining 1 percent. Did they or did they not get it all? It is the surgeon who responds. His letter contains pages of medical gobhledygook, but somewhere in the middle of a paragraph, one sentence in plain English stands out: "In summary, no cancer was found." A phone call confirms my interpretation—I'd never had cancer. Dr. Watson's reading of the frozen section had apparently been in error. Dr. Watson is 80 years old. He has just retired.

Burning-Dog Dream

A company picnic. I let my dogs, Norman and Fred, go alone to an island where a bonfire burns, while I stay and party on the mainland shore. In an attempt to appear witty, I signal to the dogs, folding a page of yellow paper up and down in Morse code. The bonfire flares up, and I see the two dogs run. Norman is on fire, and I'm too far away to help. I can't hear sounds from the island, but I know what sounds there must be.

Mood Shift

Six weeks later on a Sunday morning, Bob and I sit on our deck reading the paper. We are living temporarily in Pacifica. I hate the unrelenting gray skies. I hate our street. The neighbors keep their front doors chained. All the dogs live in garages and growl when I walk by. Even the beaches are dreary — black sand, jagged brown beer bottles, dark expressions on the faces of the men lounging against the retaining walls. But this morning the sun is out. Our lively children are gone for a few hours. Fred the big poodle dozes at my feet. The neighborhood is quiet. I have Bob to myself. And everything is terribly wrong. I take to my bed. Bob takes over the household. After some weeks, I return to Michigan to speak with Dr. Jacob, a therapist I'd seen during our years there, a talented practitioner with great regard for his patients. "Get a job, honey," he advises. "Go sell spools of thread at Woolworth's if you have to. You'll be okay." I get a job writing training materials for soldiers on how to clean batteries and defuse booby traps, and inexplicably, the depression lifts. We escape Pacifica and move to San Francisco.

Reconstruction of My North

After meeting with a series of plastic surgeons who want signed permission from my husband to reconstruct my breast and who don't know the difference between a 34B and a 34D, I find a team of doctors at the UCSF plastic surgery clinic who understand about cup size and behave as if the body in question is mine. But the scheduled surgery is postponed at the last minute — I am already in the admitting room—and from my sobs, I learn how important this restoration has become to me.

Two weeks later the operation takes place. They move the great swimming muscle around from the back, an island of flesh, skin and blood vessels attached, and reduce the right breast for symmetry. A new breast rises on the front chest wall, bionic, but blind. Flexes like a bicep. The graft takes well. Old jellyfish goes to live on a closet shelf. In clothes you can't tell — there's cleavage even! But my freestyle's crooked, and Mandy, nursed till she was 2, dreams of rotten coconuts.

Later the right breast is replaced with an implant. Scar tissue from the reduction, the surgeon explains, keeps casting "a confluence of shadows" on mammograms. The succession of false alarms and biopsies is punishing. I become doubly bionic.

The Lawsuit

I consult a medical malpractice attorney who teaches at a West Coast law school. He fails to obtain copies of my medical records and misses the one-year

statute of limitations for filing. I'm referred to a new attorney who sues the medical entities AND the former lawyer. After five years, we receive an offer to settle. We are to absolve Dr. Watson of any wrongdoing. He still claims he saw cancer in the frozen section. We accept the settlement, buy a station wagon, take the kids to Palm Springs, and redo our kitchen. I wouldn't have sold a hreast for anything close to the five-figure amount we received, but we decide to close this chapter and get on with our lives.

I tell my attorney that if I'd known how incontrovertibly he'd established Dr. Watson's error, I would have waited for a trial. It would have helped to hear somebody say they were sorry. "Your very response is why we don't like our clients to see their files," the attorney replies.

In an attempt to make sense of events that demand explanation but defy analysis, I request a copy of my file from the second attorney. His skillful deposition of the pathologist is riveting. Dr. Watson claims the cancer he saw in the frozen section appeared in just one slide, the only one not preserved for reference. All the other slides were free of malignancy. But under questioning, he admits that cancer could not have existed in a single area without also showing up in the surrounding tissue.

I tell my attorney that if I'd known how incontrovertibly he'd established Dr. Watson's error, I would have waited for a trial. It would have helped to hear somebody say they were wrong, to say they were sorry. "Your very response is why we don't like our clients to see their files," the attorney replies.

Identity

A documentary film I once saw tells of an aborigine born without limbs. He has hands and feet, a torso of sorts, a huge and handsome head, and an indomitable spirit. Remembering this boy's refusal to be identified by his limitations, I wonder why loss of breast should be such an insult. Where does identity reside — surely not in any single member. Intellectually, I accept my status. I have nursed my last child. I am married to a man who knows and loves me. In the grand scheme of things, I don't need breasts for seduction or lactation. I haven't had to deal with cancer, and now I needn't fear breast cancer. And yet I am sad. I am no longer who I was. Victoria's Secret catalogues fill me with envy. "Do you miss breasts?" I ask Boh. "I miss your hreasts," he replies. Me too. But we have a beautiful big kitchen. The station wagon is long gone, sold to a man who threatened to sue us when the transmission failed. The dreams of rage subside.

The Mud-Eating-Baby Dream

At the bottom of the hack stairs outside our San Francisco home sits a baby wearing only a diaper, eating mud. She stuffs it in her mouth, her hands covered with muck. I stumble down the stairs, pick her up, take her inside. She's sturdy and accepting. I will take care of her. We will be all right.

Telling Stories

Stephanie Rapp

WE ARE SITTING ON HER patio, a small patch of cement outside the kitchen. In the six months since I've seen her, Lisa has put on some weight. When I hugged her, I felt my own newly thin body fit neatly into her curves.

The ice in our gin and tonics has melted. A trickle of sweat pools behind my knee. It is a familiar moment, being here with my best friend, and I close my eyes to fix the image so that I won't forget it.

As we have done throughout our 10-year friendship, we are telling each other stories. I tell her about the time I was 13 and traveling by train with my family from New York to Florida. Bored with magazines and Chinese checkers, I went to the club car where I met Tim. Although there was nothing remotely attractive about him, we were, within minutes, locked in a furious embrace on the platform between the cars.

"I don't know how it happened," I tell her.

"Raging hormones," she says.

We laugh and sip our drinks.

SHE TELLS ME about her horse, Pico. She felt about him the way I did about boys. I close my eyes and imagine her, young, rail-thin, buck teeth before the braces came off. She's brushing Pico's mane, looking into his brown eyes—her

own green eyes wide with love, perhaps with desire.

My upbringing was so different from hers. When people ask where I'm from, I like to say that I grew up in a mall. The suburbs suited me, the predictability of things, the need to create disturbances, the restlessness that bubbled beneath the surface.

I can barely recall my childhood. Through a jumble of comforting images, a few stand out—my grandmother's head howed in prayer as she lit the Sabbath candles, the two pet rabbits and the babies that appeared with frightening regularity, the day I learned to ride my bike but not, unfortunately, to stop it. With puberty, though, came a clarity of senses that allowed me to recall the smallest moments of the most inconsequential day.

AT 13, I was fearless, with longings that Arival any I've felt as a woman. Since getting out of the hospital, I have tried to recapture my teenage years. I surround myself now with the smells and textures of those days. I wear my hair in two braids, wash my skin with Noxema, and roll clear strawberry-flavored gloss on my lips.

"Drippy lips," I tell Lisa, "were very sexy," and again we laugh.

I have been on a quest for Love's Fresh Lemon cologne, and I sprinkle Aramis, the scent of my first boyfriend, on my sheets at night. Although I am almost 40, I know that I look like that girl again. I don't care about my youthful appearance. What I want is to feel invincible.

I have not had a drink in a long time and the effects are immediate.

"I was 13 when I first got drunk," I tell Lisa. "It was at a party. My friends and I bought a few bottles of grape Malt Duck that we left in the bushes."

At some point, I polished off half a bottle of the carbonated drink. All I remember from that evening is crying. A room filled with drunk teenage girls, weepy with booze and desire. The boys marveled at first at this display of raw emotion, then grew increasingly disgusted. Alcohol made them horny but it created within us longings that they could never fill.

I know that I am speaking too much. At other times, I would stop and let her tell me a story. But these are not other times. She fills my glass with ice and gin. My voice begins to sound like the girl I was then. We spoke quickly and loudly; you could hear the exclamation points.

It was the false drama of those days that appeals to me now. Everything was equally important—a pimple, a cheating boyfriend, a missed period. Information had to be conveyed immediately, through carefully folded notes and late-night phone conversations. In that world, patience was never a virtue.

Lisa's nose is red and she moves to the shade offered by the lone tree in her yard. I adjust my chair to keep me in the sunlight.

I notice how muscular her legs have become from running. She was always athletic. She was the captain of the high school volleyball team and ran cross-country during the winter.

"My best memories from high school are the sports. With boys, I was shy. I never could have undressed in front of one. But there was no modesty in the locker room."

"I got my varsity letter in shoplifting," I joke.

I tell her about stealing leather jackets,

carrying wire clippers to snap coats from their alarms. We took orders—two size 10 shearling, one size 12 brown. I was never caught, but Linda was. I remember how quickly she crumpled, the toughness gone as the security guard whisked her into the back room.

"What did your parents say?" Lisa asks. "Didn't they know any of this?"

"No. I was a good student, so they couldn't complain about my grades. If I was drunk, I'd sleep at Sherri's. Her mother was never home. We got away with murder." I stop. Then continue.

"There was one time when my father chased Joe Gargano away at midnight with a baseball bat." I was crazy about Joe. At a time when boys were short and pudgy, Joe was long and lean, with dark eyes and a mustache. He was the first boy to French-kiss me. I planned my day around Joe, choosing clothes that I thought he'd like, and always, coincidentally, drinking from the water fountain outside his shop class when the period ended.

"He's probably bald and fat now, with five kids," Lisa says. "He's probably chasing boys away from his daughters with a baseball bat."

This strikes us both as hysterically funny and we toss back our heads and laugh. I laugh so hard that my sides ache but I cannot stop. Quickly, the laughter turns to tears and I am sobbing, we are both sobbing. We look at each other, smile, and continue to cry.

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When her husband comes home, he sees us, two tanned bodies, faces streaked with tears. He sees the gin bottle, half empty, on the counter. He thinks we are crying because we are drunk, and chides us for drinking in the heat.

Lisa shoos him away, whispers something that makes him stop and look at me. Without hearing, I know she is telling him that the chemotherapy didn't work.

Although he has retreated into their bedroom, we still feel her husband's presence. "This won't do," I say. "Let's get out of here."

"I know where I'm taking you," Lisa says. "Wash your face."

We share a cool washcloth. I let her use my lip gloss, and when our lips are appropriately drippy, we head out. In the car, she ties a bandanna around my eyes. She finds a radio station that plays songs from the '70s and we sing "Go Your Own Way" and "Moonshadow" until we arrive.

From the minute I feel the blast of cold air, I know where she has taken me. It is a fancy mall, not like the one from my youth. The boys that congregate are not as good-looking as those I remember, and the girls wear more makeup than I did. But I enjoy looking at them, at the way they fling themselves about, taking up much more space than they are entitled to.

In the pharmacy, we spray each other with Tabu and sniff indelicately at each other's wrists and necks. When we pass a jewelry store, I decide to get three more

*"Come on, Anthony.
Move it," he said to his
best friend, who was sitting
next to the crushed door.
"Tony, man, come on." A
burning cigarette had
fallen from Tony's hand
and was smoldering
on the plastic mat.*

holes in my ear lobe. "We pierced each other's ears, with a sewing needle and a slice of raw potato," I tell Lisa as the clerk sprays an icy potion on my ear. "When I did Sherri's, I couldn't get the needle through. Her ear lobes were really thick. She was on her bed, screaming, with a needle sticking out of her ear. I was so stoned, I kept laughing." Remembering, I start to laugh. The clerk tells me to stop moving.

I don't flinch when the piercing gun shoots through my ear. The clerk hands me a mirror. When I look at myself I see a set to my face that is totally foreign and yet completely familiar.

THERE IS ANOTHER story I want to tell Lisa, a story I have never told anyone. One Friday night, after a friend's party, six of us crammed into Rocco Romano's silver Trans Am. We were drinking, passing bottles from the back seat to the front, *Frampton Comes Alive* blaring from the 8-track player. It was raining and one of the windshield wipers was broken. I was sitting next to Rocco, touching him and kissing when we slowed, but never stopped, at intersections. He was unbuttoning his jeans with one hand, and my hand was on his warm stomach when we skidded sideways into a telephone pole. I wasn't scared; it felt that we had moved so slowly. Even the noise of breaking glass and crumpling metal sounded muffled and safe. From the back seat, I heard my friend Sherri crying, then the other girls. No one, it seemed, was hurt badly. Rocco and I helped them out of his side door.

"Come on, Anthony. Move it," he said to his best friend, who was sitting next to the crushed door. "Tony, man, come on." A burning cigarette had fallen from Tony's hand and was smoldering on the plastic mat.

He wasn't moving. When Rocco reached inside the car for him, I saw the blood.

"No! No!" Rocco was crying, holding his friend's hand. His white tee shirt splattered red, his jeans still unbuttoned, he was howling, animal sounds coming from his mouth.

When the ambulance came and they pulled Tony from the car, I glimpsed the body before the sheet was pulled up. Although the features were his—deep-set eyes, brown-black hair, a crooked nose broken in a fight—I did not recognize the face.

Like my classmates, I took the day off from school to go to the funeral. The football team sat together, stiff and uncomfortable in their suits. Without shoulder pads, they looked small and defenseless. Rocco was in the third pew, head bowed, shoulders shaking. The next day his father would send him away to military school. And sitting in the back of the church, filled with Tony's grieving relatives and the sickly sweet smell of roses and death, I wondered when I would be punished.

THE CLERK TAKES the mirror from my hand.

"I'm hungry," Lisa says. "Let's get something to eat."

I am tired. I think to tell Lisa to take me home, but I know she's happy to give me this outing, that she mistakes the resig-

Third Place Poetry

Forbidden Fruit

In August, bees come to drown
in the apple juice.

Plump black corpses ride the
swells of clotted amber.

Not a twitch of life.

The afternoon ferments.

Did no bee dance his semaphore
warning?

"Apple juice in long-necked
bottles can be hazardous
to your health!"

"But the sweetness, it's to die for."
(Don't I know.)

Beeline bumble,
cautious
descending
spiral
shimmyshimmy
slow now
hairy trumpet
dips
draws the lovely stuff in
and then

Oh honey!

Barbara Lewis

nation on my face for teenage indifference.

The restaurants are filled with women munching sandwiches and salads. Other diners stop to stare as the waitress places two huge bowls of ice cream in front of us, followed by an obscene platter of fries.

"Mindy Goldberg and I used to get stoned," I tell her through a mouth of hot fudge, "and go to Sal's candy store. We bought chocolate bars and grape soda and harbecue potato chips. We put the candy out on the hood of her car and let it melt. Then we'd lick warm liquid chocolate from the paper."

We only ate this way around other girls. Around boys, we'd sip Tab. Around boys, we had better things to do with our mouths.

"I became a vegetarian at 15," Lisa says. "I spent so much time around animals, on my grandfather's farm. One day, my mom was grilling steaks. I watched the blood dripping onto the charcoal. That was it. I couldn't stand the thought of some animal dying just so I could have dinner."

"I can't eat another bite," I say. "One more store, and then it's time to go home."

We stop at Accessory World, glittery with fake gold. There is absolutely nothing there that I need or want. Until I see a row of ankle bracelets.

"Vinnie Pagano gave me an ankle hracelet when I was 16," I tell her. "It had our names engraved in gold leaves. That's why I slept with him. I was a jewelry slut."

Lisa laughs. "I'll huy you one."

"No. But let's look around a little more."

She turns and tries on baseball caps. Without glancing at the cashier, I grab two bracelets from the display and crumple them in my fist. Later, when I give one to her, I will not say that it is to remember me by.

"We can go," I tell her. As we walk out of the store, I am waiting, as I did then, for a hand to clamp down on my shoulder. I am waiting for the accusation, for the voice to say "Caught you." I hold my breath and step through the doorway. ♦



'Summer Porch

PAMELA GERARD

Third Place Non-Fiction

Trolleyman With Cut Leg

Delta O'Hara

*S*prays of bright red arterial blood fountaining on Valencia Street as I was drinking in Blondies, gold margarita on the rocks with salt, it was a beautiful night, warm and balmy, smell of honeysuckle soaking a light breeze, almost a full moon, night birds singing and blood gushing bright red out of the leg of a trolleyman, one of those legions who push a shopping cart; raw ragged edges of the wound hanging open outside of the new sushi restaurant in a classic urban tableaux yet unappreciated by the patrons. The wound, incurred from one of his own pathetic bottles, was deep, inviting the application of any one of a number of relevant social theories. Beneath his alcoholic tan he might have been of Latin or other descent; his legs were bloated and mottled, he wore dirty Bermuda shorts and a tee shirt so soiled and discolored that, try as I might, I could not decipher the marketing intent of the corporate logo with which it had once been graced. Slimy cans and bottles were piled high in his supermarket trolley, their decayed contents crowned by Colt 45 and King Cobra's delicate bouquet. One good Samaritan dialed 911. Another emerged from the bar clutching fistfuls of cocktail napkins absurdly decorated with cartoons of naked women with big tits. A momentary celebrity, immobile, transfixed in the horrified gaze of passing New Bohemians, the trolleyman stood clutching his cart; he would neither sit, elevate the leg, apply pressure, nor reveal his name, whether requested to do so in English or Spanish. The ambulance never came; though for a hemorrhaging Latin indigent on 16th Street, one can hardly imagine why not. I went into Blondies and called again — location, physical description, and

nature of the wound in cinematographic detail, adding that I believed he would die without immediate medical attention. What is a life worth? What exact combination of elements constitutes debased? When the emergency workers finally arrived they donned latex gloves, tied off the gory hydrant, and sprayed a noxious green chemical into the black blood lake before guiding the trolleyman toward the ambulance. But he refused to enter, indicating that his trolley had to come, too. When this was refused, he waved the emergency vehicle contemptuously away. Neither would he accept money in lieu of the garbage, ignoring bystanders' proffered bills. I could only admire this exhibition of dignity in degradation; unlike the degraded moments in time that I have occupied, careless abandonment of myself to illusions and lies. Luckily, one of the emergency workers had the presence of mind to knock on the door of Super Taqueria closing early, gentrification preferring sushi, and asked the proprietress to accept the rancid treasure, which she did — which she did — and only then did he consent to get into the ambulance. The welcoming into one's heart of all that is sickening beyond description I consider a wholly noble occupation. Shrieking arias, I awake every morning, dress myself in a gown of glittering betrayals, and go chase angelfish through the sewers, the world and everything in it being ours, every day praying in a cathedral of broken idols, every night lying down to sleep in the graves of hopes and dreams with every loss and sorrow. What could possibly be more precious than the wretched garbage he refused to abandon? There was a trolleyman with a cut leg on Valencia Street one night as I sat in a bar. ♦

Miss Ford's Fan Club

Rayne Reynolds

WITH HIS BEAUTIFUL pure white cardboard cup of almost hot, double latte in his hand (two bucks!) and only four bikes waiting on the other side of the main garage door, *Orlando Smith, Ace Service Writer*, extracts from the teeniest, tiniest little inside pocket of his jeans, the carefully tinfoil-wrapped, multi-grained lithium tablet, which must last all day but especially the entire time that he's working with customers.

Removing the coffee lid without spilling a drop and pulling all the steam right off the top of the cup and into his nose like Bugs Bunny sucking up the inked aroma of roasting carrots, frame by frame, without even a *little wisp* of it going anywhere else in the huge garage, he places onto his tongue the little equalizer and swills it down with a hot shot of java.

Ahhhh! Down it goes to his center where it explodes and charges his body with a conscience, a calm, an acceptable level of enthusiasm (no laughing inappropriately or gnashing of teeth), so everyone's happy and no one is frightened and people's bikes get fixed, and he has to see Doctor only once a week, making the boss more money than he deserves so he can hire guys like *Orlando Smith, Ace Service Writer*, for too little or just enough to stay medicated and in coffee.

*The high point of my day,
my Happy Hour, is spent
reading Miss Ford
in the back storage room
where I eat my deli lunch
and study her piquant
style — her feathering of
the line, the hook and
pull of her prose.*

He unlocks and pushes open the heavy old creaking doors. Let the games begin!

AS I CRAWL AROUND on the cold, oil-smeared cement floor, surveying damage, nicks, scrapes, *"Just the physical facts, please. I do not need to know that the taxi cut you off, turned left without signaling; backed up right into you...."* cracked clipboard in hand, I proceed to produce service agreements, artfully—without typos or *slang*—that are ready to be signed (the boss loves me for this), making the man who signs my paychecks obscenely rich—rich enough to cheat on his wife (who is

beautiful), with young girls (who are not), in spite of the fact that he has a white trash fat ass. He's *so far* the hack of his neck looks like a package of kosher ballpark franks.

I am careful and polite (always). I calmly and endlessly explain cost versus safety in relation to a machine with no seat belt that can catapult you, face down, onto the road at 80 mph. So yeah, you might want to take care of those brakes today, dude.

Gay guys, fat guys, yuppie bikers, hutch dykes, people who've been to Sturgis, people who are going to Sturgis, people who want someone to go with them to Sturgis, people who love their bikes, people who hate their bikes, pretty girls who think their scooters *are* hikes, ALL know

more about service than *Orlando Smith, Ace Service Writer*. Bitch, bitch, bitch, moan, moan, moan. Even the tow-ins will argue that we're gouging. *So push it home, man*. Everyone's credit cards are maxed out. If we take checks, they have only their ATMs. If we take ATM cards, they wish we took traveler's checks. Sex for service? Not in my lifetime.

Everyone around here's jumpy. It's not just me. But where's it get 'em but eventually dead and under the restless pen of our dear Miss Ford?

The high point of my day, my Happy Hour, is spent reading Miss Ford in the back storage room where I eat my deli lunch and study her piquant style—her feathering of the line, the hook and pull of her prose. No one ever asks to share my space or, God forbid, asks a question about a service order during my afternoon sojourn with the clever and sly Miss Ford. They know if I do not have my chocolate chip cookie (without nuts) and ice cold 2% milk with Miss Ford entirely alone, the rest of the day is a very, very bad day.

Miss Ford used to be a boring guy who left work early. You could tell because the obituaries were completely formatted. So and so dies, leaving (spouse) and (child)

dren) and various loving aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews. He used to work at such-and-such and now he's stiff. He won a stupid award once, a fake wood plaque no doubt, which his mother (who survives him) will now place on her mantelpiece.

With the old obituary order-taker guy, the obits were only interesting for the ages and what killed them. And charity work. That's what really buys lines in an obit.

*When my doctor asks me,
"Do you feel you need
to continue medication?"
I answer "Yes!"
with conviction.*

This kills me. Some poor slob works hard his whole life, raises a family, travels, fights in a war, builds his own home, and 90 percent of his obit is about what he spent one weekend a month doing. *Founder of the first Boy Scout Troop in Sunny Suburbia, California*. Sometimes it's *Salesman of the Year*, in like, 1948 or something, and they put it in. Wow, I'm impressed.

I find this all very fascinating and utterly depressing. When my doctor asks me, "Do you feel you need to continue medication?" I answer "Yes!" with conviction. So it all works out. They're dead. I'm numb.

I used to look for first-day dead people. The first day an obit hit, you could call information, get their number, and hear the voice up from the grave.

Many times, usually at the end of the month when I was low on medicine (trying to make one day's worth last one and a half days) and feeling mean, I would leave a message like, "Hey, I've called three times. I'm beginning to think you're dead!" Laughed like hell, too. Or, "Hey, you sound awful. Are you sick or something? Maybe you should see a doctor...." One woman, dead at 32, had like, Mariachi music on her machine. "Jeez, that music's for stiff!" I shouted. Funny stuff.

But that was before the current Miss Ford. Now I have respect for her work and take no pleasure in crank phone calls—or reading the obits out loud like Steve Allen used to read the Letters to the Editor: "25 years with *Chevron Oil in the Shipping Department*." Twenty-five years in the Shipping Department! Not even Head of the Department or Assistant Manager. Just slaving away for oil barons until you drop! You are what you DO, man. Now you ARE fossil fuel, Charlie!

It makes you think. And for someone like me who is not perfectly balanced or calm—but *special!*—I think, Why am I plodding along trying to make it in a straight world, when what would really look good in Miss Ford's eyes is if I were to rob a bank, jump off the Golden Gate Bridge, be the first inter-species organ recipient volunteer, or kidnap someone famous? The reality is—it all boils down to typeface so small that your life can be obscured by a stranger's thumb.

I need my pill.

Honorable Mention Poetry

Piglet Mind

Nearing oldness I
confess I am still
a very little person—
not only when I see
a clear night sky
and fall up to where
there's no identity,
but right inside my skin,
as "I" slow-trots past
obsolete factories, along
degraded arteries jammed
with dull, oblivious corpuscles.

When new, I could find
"me" in smaller yet,
yets such as bugs,
destroyed by my curiosity
to play their doctor, or hypo-
chondriacal mom, or friend.

I got ambitious to grow
a big-guy's chest,
for bursting forth from
this ditsy homunculus,
but shirked the calisthenics.
Large women frightened me;
the others required protection.
Scholarship shrank everything,
like a trainride through suburbs.
That's about it.

Luckily I live near oaks,
my acorn trust funds,
and can root
and can toot
and can scribble
with my snoot.

Embrace your insignificance!
Thus say I,
(just to myself).

Paul Watsky

That Night I Had a Dream

John Teall

I DREAMT I LANDED in a Flash Gordon spaceship on an alien jungle planet. My sensors said the air was breathable so I stripped off the frogman suit and stepped out into the greenish sunlight wearing nothing but my heavy earth-issue spaceman hoots. As I walked down the ramp towards the surface, a shadow passed over the sun and I was seized by three pairs of incredibly strong legs covered with prickly thick black hairs. I looked up into the disco-ball eyes of the most enormous hutterfly I had ever seen, and the most beautiful as well—wings 10, 15 feet across flashing gold and red and green like two living heating sunsets. I let my head fall back and my arms and legs flop, giving up, submitting to this most glorious angel-queen of alien butterflies, and before we vanished into the green-tinted clouds forever, I caught one upside-down glimpse of my forlorn Flash Gordon spaceship, and my reliable stolid spaceman boots lying surprised and abandoned on the swampy jungle floor....

YOU WAKE UP in the morning from dreams of flying, exhausted, needing another six hours of solid loglike undreaming sleep. Instead, you get out of bed, feeling wrinkled and rumpled like unwashed sheets, slap on jeans and a tee shirt, and hit the street.

Coffee is needed. You curve into the coffeehouse on the corner, where the guy behind the counter greets you by name. For a moment you stare at him through hazy thick eyelids, wondering what he wants from you. Knowing another person's name is having a small power, like a lock of hair or a stolen piece of jewelry.

Mocha? he says.

Mocha. He nods and turns away to manipulate the coffee machinery. You watch him working—he has a smiling moon eclipsing the sun tattooed on his forearm and it rises and sets as he moves. His arms travel smooth well-worn paths in the air, turning a knob, holding the pitcher under the steamed-milk wand.

Two bucks.

You pay him and sit down at a table in the back, as far as possible from the morning sun crawling up the front windows. Watching people come and go is like sitting on the beach, watching waves breathe up and down the sand. This coffeehouse is at the bottom of a long hill, and every morning the businesspeople descend like the marauding vikings they are, ordering their nonfat lattes and decaf cappuccinos. There are people here whose outfits cost more than your monthly rent, whose shoes cost more money than you see in a good week. You recognize a few of them from your spot downtown, balding white men with tight shoes.

You've become a shoe critic, you realize now, with the sudden clarity that comes from drinking strong coffee. When you're downtown you're at shoe level, watching them scurry and clip-clop and plod by, waiting for a pair to stop before you look up. Why wear uncomfortable shoes? Life is too short. You look down at your own faded Chuck Taylors—they serve you well for six or eight months straight and then collapse into canvas tatters in the space of three or four days, and then you go spend 20 bucks

on a brand new pair and repeat the cycle.

With your mocha reduced to cold embers at the bottom of your glass, you buy a bagel to eat on your way downtown and go out to wait for the bus. At the bus stop are flat revolving seats the city has installed to keep the homeless from sleeping on benches; you sit on one and look up at the white specks of airplanes tracing etch-a-sketch lines across the sky. Watching wisps of gulls losing each other in sunshine gives you a brief déjà vu flash of last night's dream that just as quickly is forgotten again. Something about flying. "the statue of liberty, sailing away to sea...."

The bus comes and you ride downtown with your eyes closed, trying to hear and feel where you are without looking. You know where the bus turns up onto Market Street, but without eyes you always think it's about to happen when it's still far away. Sight must move more quickly than hearing.

You walk a couple of blocks into the Financial District to your spot and take the cardboard sign out of your backpack:

POEMS—\$2
(Love Poems Extra)

You sit on the sidewalk with your back against the gold-speckled shiny black wall. By tilting your head you can just barely see the top of the frowning building across the street. Ever since picking out this spot a few months ago, you've thought of that building as angry, or maybe not angry but irritable—its toes cold and wet hurried in mud and concrete, its bare head needing a beanie to protect it from the wind and fog. Grumpy.

The old man sitting in the newsstand on the corner teeter-totters over and gives you a howyadoin and a free paper. You read the funnies and your horoscope and then roll it up for a pillow to sit on.

Soon the first early lunchers appear, pasty- and pastry-faced, hurrying over to the slice-of-pizza place and back. It's almost 11 o'clock and they've probably been working five or six hours already, and probably have another five or six to go. Amazing.

One stops in front of you, rocking

gently back and forth in his fancy brown leather shoes like one of those inflatable clowns that always roll back toward you when you punch them. Your first customer.

I'd like a poem, he says. You look at his gray face and crooked red tie and say, Anything?

Anything.

You hunch over your notebook, think a moment, then scribble like mad and rip the page off and hand it to him. He reads it, either very slowly or repeatedly, and jams it into a suit pocket to reach for his wallet.

Thanks.

As lunchtime really gets going, you write two or three more, then you actually have someone waiting while you're writing. A line! On your all-time best day you made 42 dollars and had at one point three people waiting in line.

The guy who waited crumples his poem and throws it down in your lap, saying, You call this poetry? It doesn't even rhyme!

After he walks off without paying, you smooth the poem flat again and re-read it:

*The sun comes up like
rising bread and pushes
its way into the sky,
the oven of heaven,
and that fabulous scent
of freshly baked bread
puts a smile in your dream
and you wake up happy*

You were actually kind of pleased with that one, figuring it was really the rhythms and the image that made it. Who cares about rhyming?

You keep all the rejected poems in the back of your notebook, nine of them now including this one. Strange that they're some of your favorites....

By 2:00 or 2:30 the sidewalks are almost empty again, the tidal flow ebbing back into the buildings around you, sucking in all the gray and blue suits. You can see only one wayward pedestrian, two or three blocks away, reduced to a matchstick of blue dress and white or blonde hair. She's moving slowly, wandering from one edge of the sidewalk to the other like a sail-

boat tacking upwind. Her dress, you see as she approaches, is cut square like a sailor suit.

She stops in front of you and smiles like someone who needs to think about how to smile.

I'd like a love poem.

Is it for you, or are you giving it to someone else?

The smile closes. For me. How much extra is it?

Whatever you think it's worth.

She needs a good one, she looks like she's never been sent flowers, she looks like she's never walked hand in hand with her lover through the rain, she's never drowsed her way into Sunday afternoon tracing the length of a lover's body with her fingertips. She looks like she hasn't been kissed in a really long time.

You hand her the poem:

*I would like to take you home
and open your rosy petals
one by one
I love you
I love you not
I love you
I love you not*

She reads it and the careful smile opens carelessly; she lets a five-dollar bill flutter down to you like a square green butterfly and walks slowly away. You can see her smile moving ahead of her, perfuming the air.

You put your notebook away, smiling your own smile, and walk back down towards Market Street.

THAT NIGHT I had a dream. I dreamt I was in a crowd of people, and every time one of them smiled, a pink thick-winged butterfly lifted off their lips and flapped heavily up into the air. And every time one of them frowned, a gray and brown lizard slipped from their mouths and wriggled down to the ground.

And everyone was so busy watching the sticky-winged butterflies collide and peel themselves off each other, nobody saw the chunky little lizards slinking away across the muddy field.



North Beach Angel

©ANTHONY GIFFORD

Wild Heart

Andrea N. Rubin

THAT SUMMER IN BOSTON, Alice thought God had broken his promise and sent another flood. It rained for 30 days and 30 nights. Her friend Paul died on one of the wettest nights. For weeks before he died, a vision appeared to Alice, of a long black car with opaque windows on a winding road, traveling at a steady speed on a wet, windy night. Two men with blank faces sat in the front seat.

Alice had to work many weekends at the library, for depressed people who did not make it to work. By the time she finally had a day off on a Monday, she panicked from being alone. After the comfort of morning coffee, she lay for a long time on her couch, not knowing how she would spend the entire day that stretched full of puddles before her. Finally, she got her raincoat out of the closet and went for a walk. After a block, she realized she had forgotten her umbrella. She thought of her friend Paul sunk deep into the wet ground. Two strong men could barely lift the mud with their shovels to cover the coffin after they lowered it into its hole.

She was waiting in front of the Purity Supreme supermarket for a red light to turn green, when a city bus with blue and yellow stripes pulled up beside her. She realized then that she was standing at a bus stop. She recognized the driver, who liked to flirt with her when she rode with him.

"Are you lost?" he asked. Curly gray hair was just visible around the edges of his beret. He was tall and slender and wore his uniform like a tuxedo.

She nodded and got on, sitting down behind the driver's seat. She leaned against the partition. She could feel his seat bump against it at the stops, the way the weight of a cat shifts when you carry it in a carrying case. She read the signs printed on various parts of the walls and ceiling of the bus: SUDDEN STOPS SOMETIMES NECESSARY. It comforted her to contemplate PLEASE HOLD ON. The maxim SAFETY REQUIRES AVOIDING UNNECESSARY CONVERSATION, on the other hand, demanded sophisticated powers of discernment.

Alice did not speak to the bus driver, believing that any words out of her mouth in her frame of mind would fall into the category of unnecessary and unsafe conversation. But she needed to talk to someone. She dug her hand with its bitten nails deep into the peanut shells, wrappers, pencils, batteries, rubber bands, and ticket stubs in her bag. Surrounding the jumble, she found some old and dirty wrinkled flyers for films and lectures at the Boston Public Library. Her fingers curled around a sticky Bic pen, which she withdrew along with the flyers. She began to write. First, she copied the signs from the bus.

She looked out the window now and then, but no intersection appealed to her. She dreaded an unfamiliar neighborhood, and dreaded even more the teenager-infested and aptly named Arsenal Mall.

The rain streamed down the outsides of the windows. This is our ark, she thought. This is our ark, and each person on this bus will couple with one other person. From us will be born the world of the future.

She looked around the bus at the future. A collection of white-haired women filled the front seats near Alice. A collection of teenagers in baseball caps and baggy pants bounced up and down in the back seats. In the middle was a mix of mothers with children, a man in paint-spattered overalls, and a professorial type with glasses and a book. One man talked to anyone who would listen, "And then I got

wounded in Nam in '65. It has never been the same since..."

Since Alice was the only woman of reproductive age near the bus driver, she imagined it would be her job to pair with him.

They neared the end of the line in Waltham. She could not imagine leaving the bus. The predictable bus route soothed her, as did the rhythmic stops and starts—until a jolt pushed Alice sharply forward in her seat. She saw through the front window that the bus had halted to avoid a motorcycle that had whizzed past a stop sign.

*The rain streamed down
the outsides of the
windows. This is our ark,
she thought. This is our
ark, and each person on
this bus will couple with
one other person.*

This reminded Alice that a moving vehicle could not be as predictable as she might wish. She pictured the bus driver's foot on the brake. Every sensation that she felt on the bus came from an intention of the bus driver. Riders have the illusion that bus and driver serve them, but really, mused Alice, passengers are at the mercy of the bus driver. The bus driver might easily choose not to stop at designated stops, or choose to slam 50 people into a van crossing an intersection on a green light. He might choose to turn left or right off his route. Perhaps the driver might bring everyone to his own house and make lunch for them, or deliver each passenger to his or her own doorstep. Bus routes—imagination and illusion.

After she wrote this last down on her scrap of paper, Alice saw the town square, lush and green with rain, and wondered what she would do. She was now so far from home that she would have to stay on the bus until it brought her back to her neighborhood again.

She looked over all she had scribbled in her dark dreamy gloom. In a corner of a page she saw a scrawled poem:

*Safety requires
I love you
Avoiding unnecessary
Though you're not mine
Conversation
Sudden stops
To hold your hand
Sometimes necessary
At every red light.*

Looking up, Alice saw that no one remained on the bus except her and the driver. She tore off the corner of the page that contained the poem. The bus shivered and then became silent, and the driver turned to give Alice a questioning look.

"I thought you might like to see this," she said.

He squinted at the scrap of paper for a few minutes and then stood up to kiss Alice's cheek.

"I will keep this right here in my pocket, the same pocket over my heart where I want to keep you, Sweetheart."

At that moment she noticed his wedding ring.

"I guess you're married," Alice said.

"I guess so, too," the bus driver sighed, "But why are you so down today?"

"Oh, you know, fall in love easily. You're lucky to be married."

"Married people fall, too," he said.

"They just have to be careful," he added.

He held her tightly and kissed her once on the lips.

"I better just take you home, a sweet young thing like you."

He gave Alice a squeeze. Then he turned around with another sigh and pressed the buttons above the driver's seat to change the destination of his bus. ♦



Bridge

PAMELA GERARD

Human Remains

I

After the tea in the near-empty pot
has cooled and the table litter of muffin crumbs
and buttered knives invites departure,
after this morning's news is tossed
unwanted on the pile to be recycled,
the words unsaid mingle with those spoken
in the rising air and drift away
all as one from our notice.

II

She wears a red dress to the wedding
and kicks her shoes off in the car driving home,
her feet weary from smiling in too-high heels.
She thinks she made a good impression.
The grey and white cat greets her at the door
delicately poising on its hind legs to sniff
and mew the classic question of those left behind
"Where have you been?"

III

Sweeping the leaves from the front porch,
we have readied the house for the abandonment of winter.
In the bedroom, the mattress stripped and bare
reveals old stains, the empty dresser tilts
without the book of poems we used to prop it up.
Cupboards gape where moth dust will gather
in the cracked china bowl, and a half-full jar
of lavender honey is left as a promise.

IV

On the TV tonight was the story of the bones
found midst the tire iron and an army blanket,
in the trunk of a white Sedan de Ville.
How no one has a claim on them and no one's
missed or missing, by all official measures.
How a woman could be flung in violence
or slip in silence, bleaching to a purity
and lightness in the sheltered dark.

Jane Ellen Rubin



Steps/Fog

PAMELA GERARD

Don't Look Down

E. Eastman

DURING LAST YEAR'S EYE examination, Dr. Kennedy uttered the "B" word.

"Bifocals," she said. After 30 years of looking at life through ground glass mounted on the hridge of my nose, I cried.

"Must we say it out loud?" I asked, wiping away the tears.

Along with graying hairs, sagging facial features, and an expanding waistline, bifocals symbolize old age. In my extended Italian family, every one of the aunts and uncles wore glasses with lines in the middle of the lens: an entire generation bifocally bespectacled. I bore silent and humorous witness to their heads bobbing up and down while reading the newspaper or dialing a telephone.

The first hint of a genetic similarity came, for me, in the eighth grade. Because my pilot of a father, who never needed glasses, retired from the Air Force, the family relocated from Spain to a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts. Holbrook Junior High became my first American school in four years. At the age of 12, new to the neighborhood and new to the country, I wanted to fit in. In order not to attract attention, I sat in the back of class. That

worked except in math. I couldn't see the algebraic equations on the board. I wanted to see them, I needed to see them, but I didn't want to sit in front.

Each time the teacher erased the board, I winced. After class I stood and stared at the hieroglyphics left behind in

In my extended Italian family, every one of the aunts and uncles wore glasses with lines in the middle of the lens: an entire generation bifocally bespectacled.

casual disarray. Eventually, the teacher caught on and suggested that my eyes be examined.

In that first examination I learned that my name commands the top of the eye chart. I have spent hours, over the years, making an E with three fingers and directing them north, south, east, and west. Dr. Anapole, the revered family optometrist, was old, the office older, and the selection

of glasses impossibly old-fashioned. It was 1964 and glasses had not become the fashion accessory they are today.

After that, I sported thick, heavy, for-hidding glasses — glasses that shouted, "Studios! Make way for his books" A limited choice of glasses lined the shelves of a creaking cabinet of the examining room each year I visited: dark and gnarly tortoiseshell priest-like glasses; slick, sleazy aviator glasses; or dull black or brown plastic frames.

Of those many pairs of glasses I wore in the early years, my favorite became my grandfather's: round, gold, wire-rimmed, and, frankly, old-fashioned glasses.

Through my teens I wore glasses. I worried about what I looked like.

"Nerd," people said when they saw my high school picture in the yearbook.

"Studios," my Aunt Lil declared.

"Four eyes," my siblings taunted, staring at me with 20-20 vision.

But most of all I worried about what to do with my glasses in gym class, where they fogged in the heat of the gymnasium, making me more clumsy than I already was. And I worried when I necked that the glasses would bump off my face, hanging from one ear as I struggled to keep my lips locked with my partner. I didn't need them for petting and carefully put them away in their case. But necking was a problem. I wanted to see that meaningful look in the girl's eyes, indicating the next step we could take in that intricate dance of dating.

I graduated to contact lenses in my first year of college. While they solved the problems of fogged lenses and reading feminine eye signals, contact lenses presented other problems. Washing and disinfecting the lenses every night made me feel like a junior chemist. I returned to the specs.

AND SO THE YEARS PASSED. How I envied my peers with perfect eyesight. I couldn't find my way around a room without my glasses. At night I whispered prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary asking for the miracle that would restore my blurred vision to normalcy. And every morning, I fumbled for my glasses.

Last year, after Dr. Kennedy said the "B" word, I spent another year stubbornly lifting my glasses to peer at the tiny print, like the nutrition information on a candy bar or the movie times in the newspaper.

"Consider bifocals, dear," an octogenarian patient of mine said as I clumsily took her pulse, peering at the second hand of my watch with my glasses perched on my forehead.

I gave in.

My new, trendy anti-glare, rimless, celadon templed glasses are called "progressives." The brochure welcomed me to a life without bifocals: I skipped a stage in the technology.

These glasses would allow me to see at different lengths: a new dimension of visual comfort and appearance. No annoying lines. Natural vision without unnatural head movements. A wider range of vision.

The next morning they did errands with me: I stumbled; I lurched; I wrote bad checks. My head bobbed incessantly. I learned finally, and in frustration, to point my nose directly at the object I needed to see, like a German short-hair pointer indicating its prey.

It was lucky that the first time I put them on, I was safely at home. After a mere 30 minutes, I suffered a persistent and penetrating headache. I shelved them. The next morning they did errands with me: I stumbled; I lurched; I wrote bad checks. My head bobbed incessantly.

I learned finally, and in frustration, to point my nose directly at the object I needed to see, like a German short-hair pointer indicating its prey. But I couldn't look down without a sense of vertigo, as objects such as the swirled designs of floral rugs spun in and out of focus.

I was so frightened of looking down that I missed obvious impediments to my passing. I tripped on dog feces, discarded syringes, and uneven pavement. I hurried home to lie down and discovered that I could not—at least not in front of the television. At that neck angle, the progressives are ground for close-up viewing, and people on the screen registered fuzzy in my visual cortex.

I could not find the ends of the shirt stuck in the zipper of my pants. And if, God forbid, I were to contract crabs and have to search for the critters, I would need to learn yoga to visually access my pubic area.

The brochure warned me, finally, that there would be a period of a few days while my eyes and brain learned how to use the progressives. Perfectly normal.

TWO WEEKS PASSED, and now I wear them every day. I find that I can no longer peek from the periphery of my glasses at other people's lives: I must turn my head. I can cope with that.

I feel my head bobbing up and down as I read a newspaper or dial a telephone. I can deal with that.

But you know what? I still can't look down. I can't slouch in my seat at the movies without the screen distorting. I can't sip a soda and not have the world go from clear to chaos.

And thanks to the new eyewear, my graying hairs, sagging facial features, and expanding waistline are excruciatingly and painfully clear in the morning mirror.

But I've found a way to deal with all that: I take off the glasses.

Honorable Mention Poetry

The Therapeutic Hour

Even if it isn't raining,

next time I come

I'm bringing an old blanket.

I'm bringing a broom, too.

I'm going to hang the blanket from the little chair

to the arm of the black sofa. I can

make the roof stay up with my broom.

If you'll let me use your books

I can make walls.

I can bring raisins, and chocolate milk.

The only thing is,

I'll feel funny if you just watch.

Would you like me to bring two blankets? You could

use your desk where you usually

don't let me go, and the big chair.

I can bring enough raisins for two.

We could

go back and forth.

Nancy Sully

Naked God

John Horan

“ASK YOUR DAD,” I heard my wife say in a soft voice, respectful of the quiet basilica at Mission Carmel.

“Hey, Dad! Who’s the naked guy?” Megan yelled from where they stood in front of the ornate side altar.

I moved quickly over to her, careful not to make eye contact with the half-dozen people who were kneeling or sitting in the pews.

“That’s Jesus,” I answered softly, trying to influence her with my tone of supplication. “Remember the Baby Jesus from Christmas? Well, that’s him when he grew up.”

“Well, why is he all... dirty? And why is he wearing a torn-up skirt?” she asked even louder than before, unable to control her precocious laugh. “A man in a skirt?!”

“Umm...well...” I herded her toward the door, past the large sign extolling us tourists to PLEASE BE QUIET — RESPECT THOSE PRAYING. “He was just having a bad day,” I continued, grateful that it wasn’t one of the more gruesome crucifixes. “It was actually his worst day, but I’ll tell you about it outside.”

“Hey, Dad! Who’s the naked guy?” Megan yelled from where they stood in front of the ornate side altar. I moved quickly over to her, careful not to make eye contact with the half-dozen people who were kneeling or sitting in the pews.

I WASN’T THE LEAST BIT embarrassed by my little heathen. Rather, I was fascinated with the prospect of giving her more information and hearing what she’d have to say about it.

I had first wondered about how to broach the topic of religion with Megan a couple of Christmases ago, when she saw one of those life-size plastic nativity scenes. “Daddy, who are those people on that lawn?” Some well-installed guilt nattered at me: *Why haven’t you taken your child to church? Why didn’t you get her baptized?* Accepting that I had become one of those “fallen-away” Catholics (despite the dire warnings in parochial school), I blew it off with the belief that if I made my child do something that I didn’t do or didn’t believe in, I would just be teaching her hypocrisy.

I think, however, that I have a little existentialist on my hands. She once, at around 3 years old, came into the kitchen despondent about something and said, “I am nothing.”

Trying to bring some parental love, guidance, and psychology to the situation, I asked, “Oh, but if you’re nothing, who am I?”

“You’re nothing. You’re nobody,” she replied.

“Here, would you like sockie?” I offered her the old pink baby sock we were forbidden to wash, her favorite lovey. I figured it would be more effective than me at that point.

“Yeah. I’ll smoke it like a pacifier,” she replied, snapping it out of my hand. A most sardonic quote from a child of any age. I sat back and assured her that I would “be here” if she needed me, and tried to dismiss the slight nagging doubt as to my own existence that her comments had planted.

It would be much less nerve-racking if she’d just buy the God stuff on the normal menu.

My wife once bought a used kids’ book called something like *Hugs for Little Ones*. I looked through it critically and judged it to be sweet, well-meaning, but sophomoric prose-poetry. My scanning eye then caught the word “God” in one of the pieces. On further scrutiny I found that *Hugs* was written by Debbie Boone (the crossover Christian rock singer? Evidently!). The inscription inside the cover read, “To Tyler, Merry Christmas — Love, Gramma and Grandpa.” Since this was Berkeley where my wife bought it, and the book was brand new, I could see a pair of 30-ish grad students chucking little Tyler’s book into the used bookstore box as soon as Gramma and Grandpa drove off.

I decided to “send it to hell” likewise, and threw it on the back porch. But that very night Megan found it and brought it to me, requesting it as her bedtime story. Failing to talk her into *Goodnight Moon* or *The Big Red Barn* or even *Disney Babies at the Beach*, and being a believer in inspired moments, I decided to read the book, lovingly and verbatim.

It turned out to be a wonderful experience. The author’s sincerity, and what seemed to be real love for children, came shining through every corny piece. It was my favorite book to read to Megan for a while, because it was so...cuddly. Eventually, though, Megan asked who God was.



Cousins

PAMELA GERARD

“Is it a person? If you can talk to him, he must be a person. Where is he?”

“What do you mean he’s the whole world? How can a person be the whole world? He’s the wind?”

The more I tried to explain God in Euclidian terms—to avoid falling back on the “it’s a mystery” routine — the more skeptical she became.

AT MISSION CARMEL, after dealing with statues of saints with flaming heads and why the padres needed soldiers with all those swords and guns, we arrived at the gift shop. I managed to whisk Megan past their collection of grisly crucifixes and the holy card depicting a blond, effeminate

Saint Michael shoving his sword into a goateed, Hispanic-looking Satan. I directed her to something pretty she might want to buy. It was a lovely gold-framed picture of Mary, Queen of Heaven, floating above the clouds in a pink and blue gown, stars encircling her head and rays of grace flowing from her hands. “Well, honey, the story is, since she was the mother of Jesus she didn’t have to die. She just floated up into heaven.”

“But, Daddy, how can she breathe up there?”

Honorable Mention Poetry

TV

and the children said
they’d seen this one before
someplace like Belfast
or Belgrade
anyway it began with a B

and the children said
why is she crying
that isn’t a real baby
is it

and the children said
they were going outside
they were tired of waiting
for the dead in the streets
to get up again

and the children said
don’t worry it’s okay
we’re only playing
and anyway it’s not loaded

Mary L. R. Johnson

Mavis' Back Yard

Eileen Malone

A SHORT DISTANCE from San Francisco, protected against the seawind by a bleached wooden fence, an ancient rosebush still presents dark bloodied roses that throw out a robust perfume. It escapes, spreading, spreading not as a scent but as a heavy-bodied intoxication that only old, old roses can produce.

Tomorrow, when the morning fog lifts, a bulldozer will flatten not only these grandmotherly roses, but the entire garden, smashing orange blossom, geranium, and mint in one last redolent crush.

The garden will be replaced by a block of cement and plaster.

Ironical how now I call it a garden. All that time, we used to tell her how it wasn't a garden, not by any stretch of the imagination. It grew much too madly all over the place, wildly thick with earwigs and crawling with snails. But Mavis didn't understand our way of discriminating. Slugs are part of the order of things, she told us, pulling one off a small cabbage and setting it gently on a loose lettuce leaf. The vegetable force has no grudge against those it feeds, she insisted. Mavis was one of those throwhacks, you know, the kind who receives things undiluted.

She poured over magazines and books that had full-page color pictures of gardens. She studied them, paused, closed her eyes, and tried to smell and hear the place. Then she planted her seeds anywhere she chose. Tomatoes next to roses, marigolds between onions. Parsley around sweet alyssum. She didn't care what the books said about what should be planted with what; you just ask permission and go ahead. You encourage children to play nearby because happiness has an especially good effect on plants. And, she wagged her finger, you open up to them. Don't be like you are with people, submerged under your own dead skin. Nature is something to be stretched out to.

There are certain places, I am convinced, that are favored. Whether by magnetic or even more subtle forces, they are easily felt by persons susceptible to such things. Many of them are held sacred. This one will end up as a box of rental units and parking stalls.

I am disheartened.

Whenever I got to thinking too much about myself, Mavis would smile and suggest that I might do well to go out in the back yard and look around. I might take a particularly long look at a daisy. The golden center is a mass of botanically perfect miniature blossoms, each complete with stamen and pistil. When the flower head ripens, it produces a whole packet of seeds. If they can find a crack, they can grow through concrete.

I wanted her to make my mistakes right, but she wanted me to see things, to feel the pressure of succession, the slow but certain urge of change, the growth. To know through this green world that something beyond my own restless activity is at the heart of things.

I didn't want her to die.

She responded that everything fits into place.

Once, the fog from the sea was especially thick, and I found her standing under the willow. In a silver-green late morning light she stood within a vaporous veil and quivered with the tree like a pale bride. I waited silently. For the first time in my life, I just stood there and waited until the moment passed. I knew it was the perfect thing to do.

I told her I wanted a higher consciousness, a more intimate closeness with God. I thought I might hike Yosemite or raft the Grand Canyon.

Nature is not in the teaching business, she snapped. If I would just drop the precious lofty aims and stop making so damn much noise, perhaps I could hear the quiet voices in the burst of a dandelion puff. Everything I needed to get me on my so-called spiritual path was right here. It's all right here in this very back yard.

*Tomorrow, a bulldozer
will flatten not only these
grandmotherly roses,
but the entire garden,
smashing orange blossom,
geranium, and mint in one
last redolent crush.*

SHE REACHED A POINT where she couldn't drive anymore, and walking was painful. No more cold, windblown strolls along the pathless beach. No more long drives down the coast for pumpkins and artichokes. She was not sad that there was loss. No, she smiled radiantly, she was filled with joy that what was, was. More time now to spend in the garden, she rubbed her hands together, to explore the wonders of her back yard.

Unbelievably, it became even more abundant. But she believed in abundance so, of course, everything multiplied. She liked lots of daffodils clumped in full bloom, and would exclaim over them as though they were a whole garden of flowers. It takes the breath away, doesn't it, when you think of whatever moves a bulb to muster forces and send up shoots to catch the sunlight and begin to manufacture food for the plant. It just takes the

breath away.

She liked bushes that rambled and snarled and threw out herries and thorns in keeping with their temperament. Once she made me stick my hand inside, just so that I wouldn't be afraid to do it. Nothing scratched, nothing bit, nothing crawled on my fingers. I felt a dark dampness and cool rustling, like strands of a web, against my hand. Most of all, I felt very brave.

The garden is magical, I told her once. No, she shook her head, this is not a garden, remember. This is a back yard. Well, what I really wanted to address was the magic. Doesn't everyone? she laughed.

She's gone.

Tomorrow, this back yard will be gone.

Everywhere, everywhere, lilac branches, exquisite bird nests, miles of bougainvillea will be chopped, stomped, crushed into the mortar.

Damn! I've fought for the whales, for the rivers, for the very air I breathe. Couldn't I have fought for this? Is Mavis' back yard, like all gardens, merely a tiny bubble floating on the troubled surface of the world that will burst, leaving no trace?

So they will smother the garden like they smother everything else—so what?

I don't know.

*Once, the fog from the
sea was especially thick,
and I found her standing
under the willow. In a
silver-green late morning
light she stood within
a vaporous veil and
quivered with the tree like
a pale bride.*

Honorable Mention Poetry

Story With No Words

Ler's say the girl is twelve,
wearing a black one-piece suit
with tiny white stars on it.
The boy has a shy smile,
no hair on his face.
They stand with their toes at the edge,
arms overhead like arrows
and dive, splashing
at the same moment.

She recalls water down her sides
as she silvered under the blue.
Eyes open in another element.
And later, the sun shouting
yellow, yellow, yellow
to her dark shoulders
while a hand filled with blueberries
lifted towards her open mouth.

Years later when asked
why she liked this boy,
she can't think of a single word
they ever said to each other.

Linda Elkin

A SHORT DISTANCE from San Francisco, sea fog and ice plant swirl around the broken fence of Mavis' back yard.

A fluttering, fleeting ray of sun catches pollengold dust on the amber wings of a pausing butterfly. The wind rustles and blows the willow leaves to the ground.

A dandelion puff suddenly swells and explodes like the big bang birth of a galaxy.

Happiness

Al Ujcic

HER FACE WAS parchmented like an old treaty. Yet her blue eyes, like Adriatic water, sparkled. It was Decline and Spirit fused, a not going gentle into that good night by someone who'd never heard of Dylan Thomas.

This sunny village of Veli Brgrad was 16 kilometers from the remnants of Austro-Hungarian grandeur on the stone-chip Istrian tourist shoreline. Back behind the yeasting hills.

She lived at Number 35, in front of which she now sat sorting a pile of potatoes, no doubt dug up by her. Violets and irises and colorful volunteers surrounded her.

I looked into my cousin's eyes from the taxi that brought me here from my hotel in Opatija. She must have heard the machine before she saw it, because she was looking alertly and inquisitively my way, taking in the shining Mercedes Benz hood symbol and slippery nineties sheetmetal ooze.

Now with a start she recognized me behind the safety glass. Her surprise made me embarrassed by the disproportion of material things: her grimy hands evaluating spuds and my soft finger plucking at the Mercedes' comma of a door handle.

She was getting up as I was getting out. We met in an embrace in the courtyard, she prying herself out of her gnarl in a sunny memory of translucent youth, flirting with me. She'd never been more than a hundred kilometers from here, and then only once on foot to visit the grave of her husband: he'd fallen as a consequence of some stratagem by a general or corporal inspired to advance the cause of an emperor.

We squeezed, and her squeeze was durable, strong enough to lift and carry me, if she had had to. All bones and sinew, she cried out my name, and I felt her breath rush through her. And we danced, I think, me being careful not to tread on her thinly clad feet with my city shoes.

"Yes, Maria," I said to my cousin. "It's me. I heard you'd died but I didn't believe it."

"But I did die," she said.

"So did I."

She laughed. "And about your son, the one who came here with you last year and then married."

With Maria it was first things first. She'd been enchanted by my son and he with her. "He made a baby. Yes."

"And?"

"Maria, my darling. Why are you looking at me that way?"

"You know. Don't tease me. Is the baby a boy?"

"What does it matter if it's a boy or a girl? Honestly, Maria. What if the family name ended here and now because it was a girl baby? My older son has a girl and I am thrilled with her. I would give my life for her, if I had a life to give."

"Come in the house," Maria said. "You are my heart." The 90-year-old woman crooned my name. "Have some of Victor's wine."

"But not with cola," I said. The last time I'd visited her, Maria insisted that I drink the wine, homemade by her bullock of a bachelor son, with a festive squirt of what passed for a syrupy carbonated beverage in this country.

It was cooler in the small stone house, in Maria's kitchen. The room was dominated, after Maria, by her wood stove. I saw my whimsical reflection in the ornate chrome knobs extending like broad grins from the pale enameled surfaces. She brought out a bottle of wine with a much used cork sticking out of it, a clean glass, and a liter of cola. From a cupboard she retrieved a dish of cold, boiled and quartered potatoes. I drank and ate. "The potatoes look like snow and taste like cream," I said politely.

"And the wine? Is the wine gone wrong?"

"The wine is good."

"I'll tell you, after you tell me the baby is healthy, why I hope the baby is a boy."

"I know why."

"Eat and shut up. I'll tell you. Because you are the last of the bloodline. I mean your sons are."

"Maria..."

"I would love your girl granddaughter too, if I saw her, without question I would. I will love this new baby whether it be a boy or a girl. Although I'll never see your grandchildren because they live in another world. But this new baby will be the last. And if this baby is not a boy, it means our

bloodline comes to an end for all eternity."

I threw up my hands. "I don't care, Maria. My grandchildren are alive and healthy and full of promise. The 6-year-old takes tennis lessons!"

She was getting up as I was getting out. We met in an embrace in the courtyard, she prying herself out of her gnarl in a sunny memory of translucent youth, flirting with me.

"Bloodlines!"

"The hell with bloodlines, my beloved. I am a romantic too, but I am telling you, grandson or granddaughter makes no difference to me. I praise life."

"You are an outlaw. A romantic of your own sort. It's in our blood. Now tell me. Is it a boy or is it a girl?"

"The news will please you."

"It will please me either way."

"It's a boy, Maria. It's a grandson."

She smiled the serene smile of a 14-year-old maiden. "Well!"

"My son wished for a boy also," I admitted to her. I was happy. I was happy that they were happy. The wine was good. The cola taste was, to say the least, unusual. The cold potato grown from Maria's plot of earth on the limestone slopes really hit the spot. "Where did they bury us, Maria?"

"In the heart of your grandchild." ♦



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THE NOE VALLEY VOICE

FREE NEWS — THE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER OF NOE VALLEY — SINCE 1977



Waiting for the Bride. It may not be often that post-wedding relaxation includes scanning the Noe Valley Voice. But that's what Maria (newly married to Kim) Reynolds appeared to be doing on this sunny day in the gold country, northeast of Sacramento.

Photo by Beverly Thorp

And Now for a Few Words About Our Sponsors

As recently as 1994, the *Noe Valley Voice* didn't publish in August. The biggest duty our editors and contributors had to deal with was a summer barbecue during the month of July. Schools were closed. Vacations and trips were planned and made.

But with the advent of our Literary Contest and special issue, most of us who created the *Voice* were back at the keyboards and on the phones just as if it were May or June.

Obviously, we had such enthusiasm for the content and form of our first August effort that we chose to publish again this year.

Our desire would have been muted, however, if the businesses you see advertising in the following pages had not

lent their financial support. Thanks to them, we're here to give you a good read. We're grateful.

Thank you, Noe Valley, and thanks also to those who set up shop just beyond our neighborhood boundaries. After all, everyone can't be in Noe Valley at once—even though we understand why they'd want to.

You, dear reader, can do more to help than just picking up a few copies. You've heard the common plea from publishers:

please patronize our advertisers and tell them that you saw them in our pages. That helps us all greatly—creating a ripple of good will that allows us to continue to grow.

—Jack Tipple and Sally Smith

Voice Mail

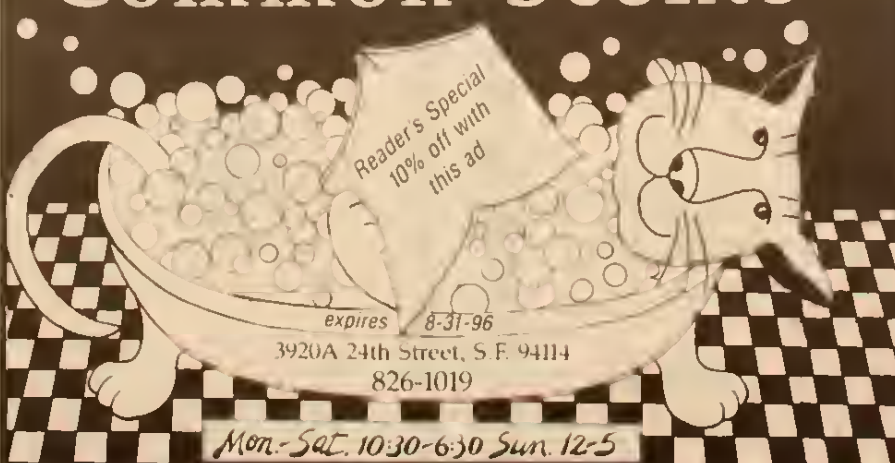
The *Voice* is eager to receive your letters to the editor, for possible publication in future issues.

Write to the *Noe Valley Voice*, 1021 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 94114. Or send brief e-mail correspondence (no long manuscripts, please) to jaxvoice@aol.com.

Remember to include your name, address, and phone number, so that we can contact you if we have questions. Note that letters may be edited for clarity and conciseness. Unsigned letters (anonymous notes) will not be considered for publication.

To check out our home page on the World Wide Web, go to <http://www.noevalleyvoice.com>.

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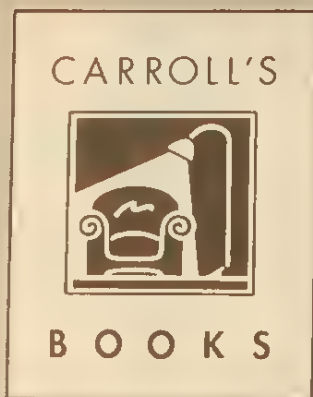
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About This Issue

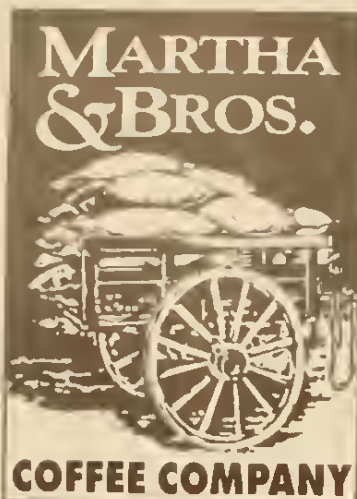
Check us out. The next pages include an updated report from the Noe Valley-Sally Brunn Library, the latest listing of neighborhood groups and organizations, and a new Calling Card that lists the phone numbers for many city services. All that, plus some of the best shots from our band of contributing photographers—and of course, Zippy.

Mazook, Florence, Aunt Hermione, and Officer Perillo are not appearing in this issue. If they're not vacationing, we hope they're at least relaxing, and appreciating the break from the deadlines.

Also temporarily out of view are Short Takes, More Mouths to Feed, Calendar, and Class Ads. They will return, and we hope you will too.



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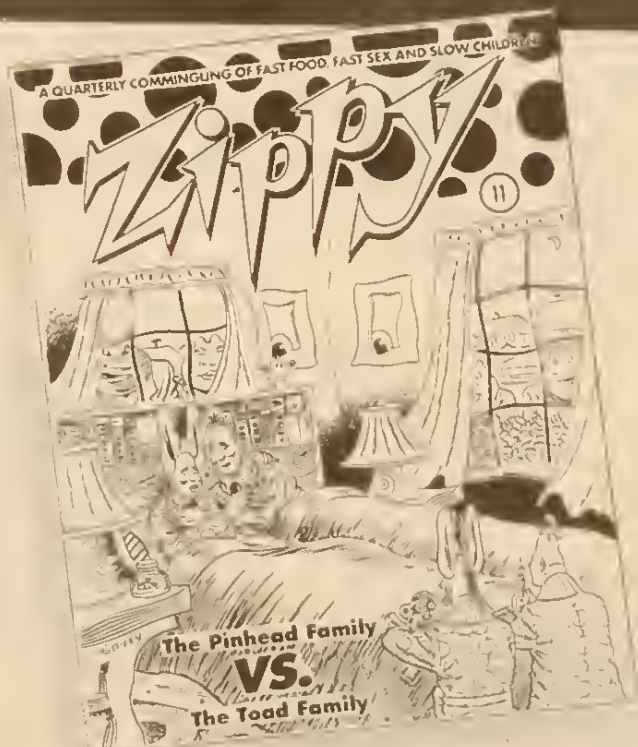
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Our Readers Keep Writing That They Can't Stop Reading

Theater director Adam Beck traveled from Vicksburg Street to the Czech Republic this summer, and found this photo op in Wenceslas Square during a break from his directing project duties. "Prague is lovely, but it pales in comparison to Noe Valley," Beck writes. He may be right, but where's our outdoor sculpture?



Fulfilling her audition to be the Voice's East Coast distribution rep, Laura Ritenour tried to hand-deliver a copy to Bill & Hill, but never made it past the gate. It's probably best that she keep her day job as project director for the San Mateo County Health Care for the Homeless Project. That would mean she and husband Doug could remain in Noe Valley, where they've lived on Alvarado Street for the past two years.

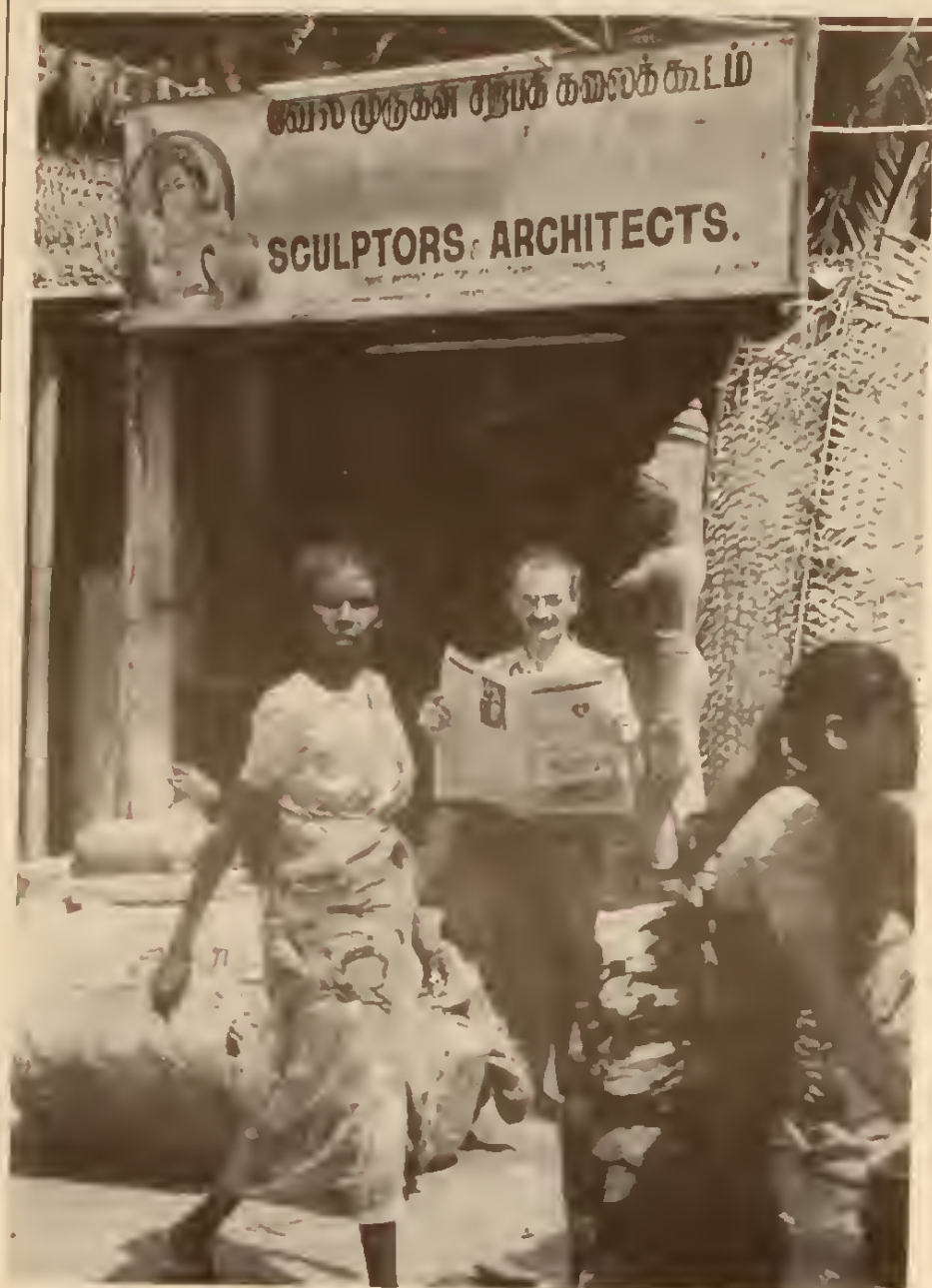


Lyle Taylor has called Noe Valley home for 10 years, and since he's been an avid Voice reader for most of that time, perhaps it's not so unusual that he'd be reading a section to a stone horse in London's British Museum. Well, okay it is odd, but this was Lyle's first trip to England, and it's rumored that most sentient beings started avoiding him in the face of his constant hometown boosting. We're glad you made it back safely, Lyle. Photo by Becky Cunningham

Women's Writing Group

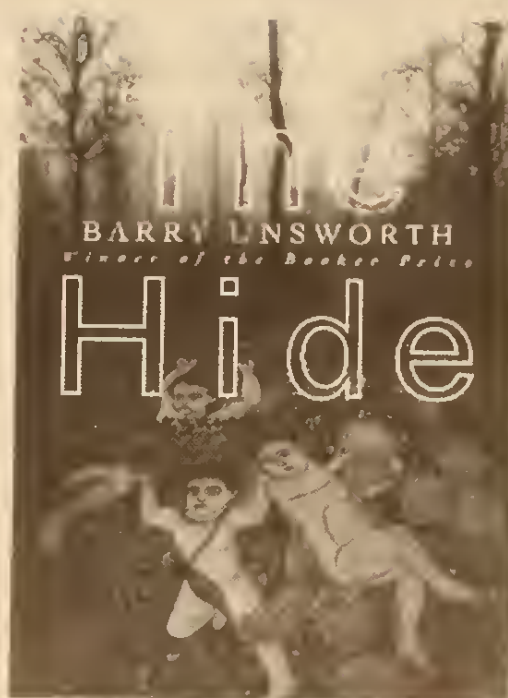
Sometimes the hardest thing about writing is getting yourself to do it. This 12-week workshop, beginning in September, will provide a positive and supportive environment to help make writing a pleasure. The group emphasizes compassion for ourselves as women and as writers. Through a variety of exercises, we'll learn to quell the critic within ourselves, and enjoy the freedom of self-expression.

Linda Gebroe is a freelance writer living in San Francisco. With 20 years' experience in professional communications — 8 as a self-employed writer — she brings creativity, humor and understanding to her work and yours. For more information, call (415) 695-1420



A Passage to India. That's Henry Karnilowicz perusing the foreign press in Mahabalipuram, a small village on the southeast coast—a three-hour bus ride from Madras. "Mahabalipuram is known for its beautifully carved stone temples, which date from around 700 AD," reports Henry, "and for its contemporary stone masons, who carve deities and other statues to order from granite and marble." Other advantages of travel to this area Henry recorded are the white sandy beaches at the edges of the warm blue Indian Ocean, fresh seafood dinners for around \$2, and a double hotel room for \$6.

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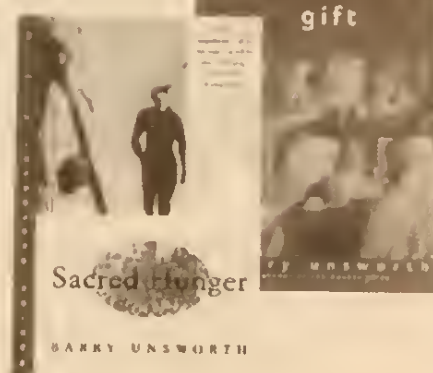
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MORE BOOKS to READ

This month, in honor of the *Summer Literary Issue*, librarians Roberta Greifer, Carol Small, and Comelia Van Aken-Sanks, along with the rest of the Noe Valley Library staff, would like to share a few of their personal favorite books. To check them out, drop by the Noe Valley—Sally Brunn Branch, 451 Jersey St. Hours are Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Wednesdays, 1 to 9 p.m.; Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Fridays, 1 to 6 p.m.; and Saturdays, noon to 6 p.m. Phone: 695-5095.

Staff Favorites: Adult Books

Roberta (branch manager) recommends *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and *Fathers and Crows*, William Vollmann's novel about the settling of the Canadian wilderness by the French.

Carol (children's librarian) says her suggestions would be *A Reckoning* by May Sarton, and *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* by Dorothy Bryant. In both, the characters are richly rewarded when they reflect on their lives and relationships.

Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey mystery *The Nine Tailors* and Esther Forbes' fascinating biography *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* are two of reference librarian Comelia's favorites.

Lourdes (library technician) is inspired by the non-fiction classic *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale.

So Far from God, Ana Castillo's realistic story covering two decades in the life of a Chicana family, is at the top of the list for Christina (library assistant).

Kirsten (page) recommends *Anno Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy's classic social drama of infidelity and retribution.

The classic gothic tale of frustrated love by Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, is page Maria's favorite.

The Remains of the Day, by Kazuo Shiguro, which portrays the insular world of the perfect British butler, is the choice of Eric (page).

Mearra (page) enjoyed George Orwell's satirical tale of the future, *Animal Farm*.

Free Film Series Shows Three Classic Comedies

On Wednesday, Aug. 21, 7 p.m., the Noe Valley Library, 451 Jersey St., screens three classic comedies: *The Floorwalker* (Charlie Chaplin), *Cops* (Buster Keaton), and *Leave 'Em Laughing* (Laurel and Hardy).

Staff Favorites: Children's Books

Roberta's favorites are the classic adventure tale *The Swallows and Amazons* by Arthur Ransome, and Mary O'Hara's novel for animal lovers everywhere, *My Friend Flicka*.

Two Newbury winners, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, a science fiction novel, and *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, a historical tale set on the American prairie by Patricia MacLachlan, are highly recommended by Carol.

Two picture books, Tomie de Paola's *Bill and Pete*, the zany tale of a young Egyptian crocodile and his bird-friend, and *Harry the Dirty Dog* by Gene Zion, are Comelia's favorites.

Lourdes loves *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*.

Christina recommends the Newbury winner *The Bridge to Terabithia*, a realistic novel by Katherine Paterson.

Roald Dahl's novel *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*, in which Mr. Fox outwits three rich, mean farmers, is Maria's favorite.

The Caldecott winner by Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*, is recommended by Mearra.

Kirsten loves *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, the simple story of friendship, love, and sharing.

Children's Programs

Preschool Story Hour, for kids 3 to 5, unfolds at 10 a.m. on Tuesdays, Aug. 6 and 13.

The Wednesday *Lapsits*—starting at 7 p.m. on Aug. 7, 14, and 21—will feature songs, stories, and fingerplay for infants and toddlers and their parents.

Short Films for children include "Harold's Fairy Tale," "Let's Give Kitty a Bath," and "Red Riding Hood," to be shown at 10 and 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 20.

This month's "More Books to Read" was compiled by librarian Cornelia Van Aken-Sanks. All events take place at the Noe Valley—Sally Brunn Library, 451 Jersey St.

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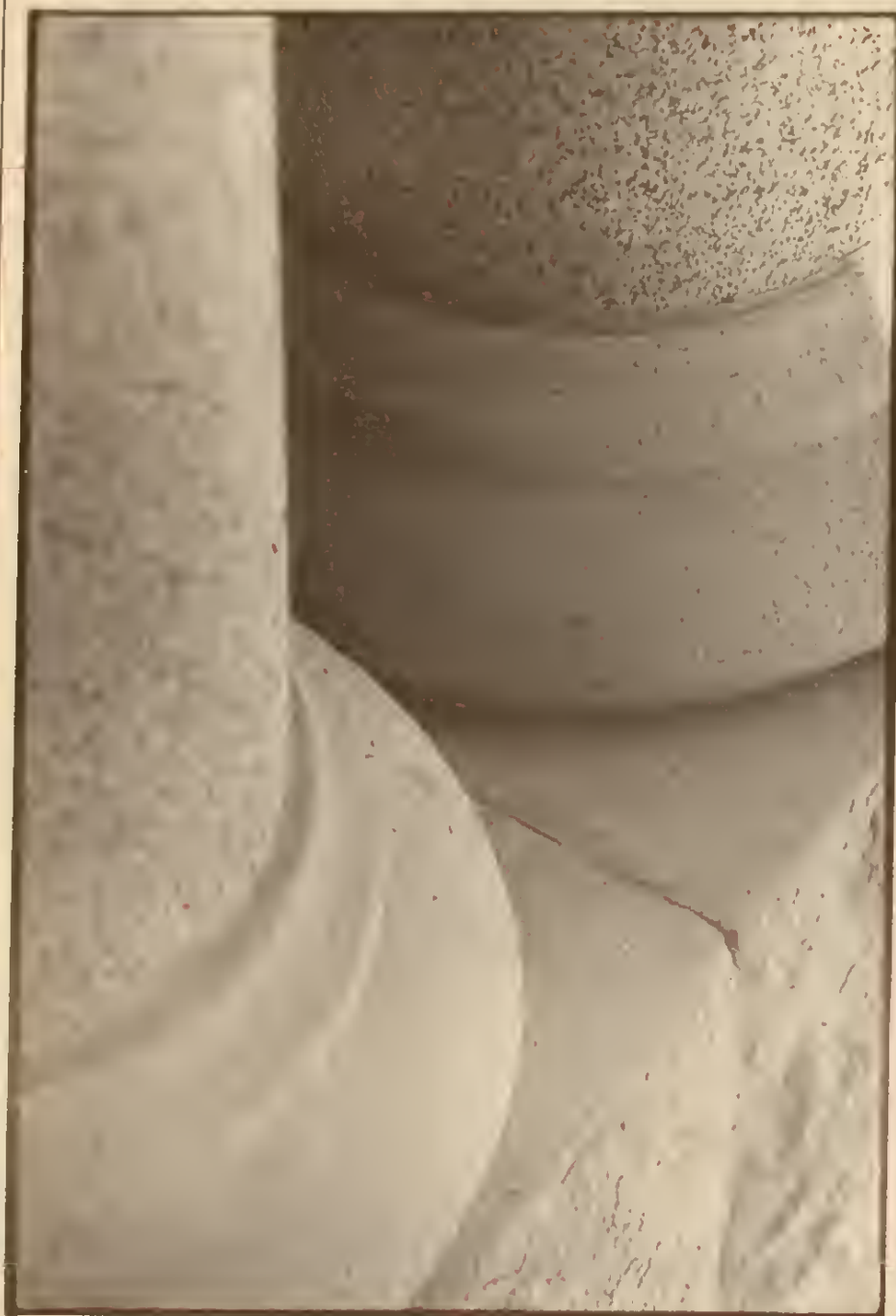
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The Faces of 199



for a last-day-of-school party featuring potluck and gifts for the kids at Douglass Park. The event has
Photo by Beverly Sharp

f Noe Valley 96

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in the

NEXT ISSUE

of

The Noe Valley Voice



MORE MOUTHS
to feed

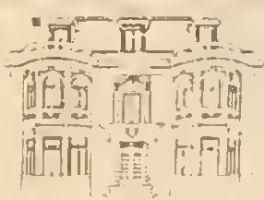
More Mouths to Feed wants to show off *your* newest family member. If you have welcomed a baby into the house or just adopted a teenager, please send your announcement to *The Noe Valley Voice*, More Mouths, 1021 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 94114. Don't forget to include your phone number, so we can arrange for the family portrait. ☐



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Check It Out: At Debra King School in Noe Valley, Adam Schutz (left) and Cole Williams are not sure they let girls in their clubhouse—even if she does have a camera and says "please."

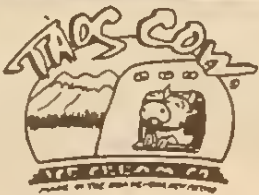
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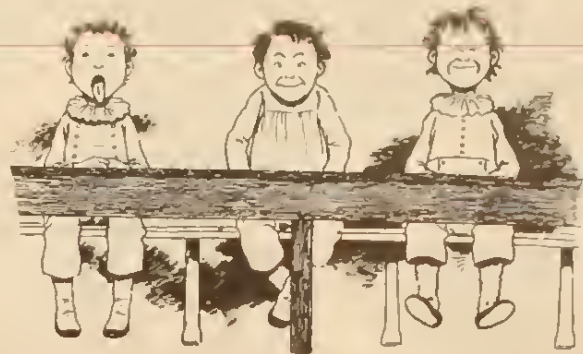
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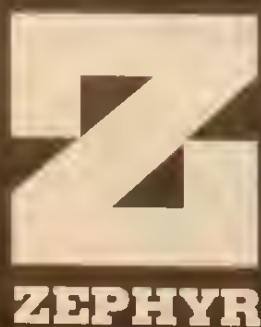


Surrounded by an External Skeleton of scaffolding, the Noe Valley Ministry building on Sanchez Street saw scores of human worker bees begin the roof replacement and facade repair in June.

Photo by Beverly Thorp

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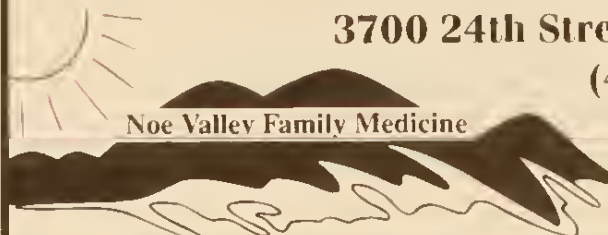
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7:30 p.m. Call for location.

Dolores Heights Improvement Club
Contact: Amy Powell, 647-4228
Mailing Address: 3732 21st St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114
Meetings: Bimonthly; membership meetings
semi-annually. Call for details.

Duncan Newburg Association (DNA)
Contact: Evelyn Martin, 826-6734,
Keith Eickman, 282-8988,
Dennis Downing, 647-0937, or
Deanna Mooney, 821-4045
Mailing Address: 560 Duncan St.,
San Francisco, CA 94131
Meetings: Held periodically. Call for details.

**East & West of Castro Street
Improvement Club**
Contact: Paul Kantus, 647-3753
Mailing Address: 492 Douglass St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114
Meetings: First Wednesday of month, Noe
Valley Library, 451 Jersey St., 7:30 p.m.

Fairmount Neighborhood Association
Contact: Susan Nutter, 285-8484
Mailing Address: 78 Harper St.,
San Francisco, CA 94131
Meetings: Held periodically at Upper Noe
Rec Center, Day & Sanchez, 7 p.m.

Fair Oaks Neighbors
Contact: Paul Nixon, 647-5183
Mailing Address: 163 Fair Oaks St.,
San Francisco, CA 94110
Meetings: Call for details.

Friends of Noe Valley
Contact: Cecile Lozano, 695-9502
Mailing Address: 327 Jersey St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114
Meetings: Second Thursday of month,
Noe Valley Library, 451 Jersey St., 7:30 p.m.

La Leche League of San Francisco
Contact: Susan Condon, 282-7816
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 460566,
San Francisco, CA 94146-0566
Meetings: Third Thursday of month, Upper
Noe Rec Center, Day & Sanchez, 12:15 p.m.

Liberty Hill Neighborhood Association
Contact: John Barbey, 695-0990, or
Hilda Bernstein, 282-8232
Mailing Address: 3333 21st St.,
San Francisco, CA 94110
Meetings: Quarterly. Call for details.

Mission/Noe Valley Kiwanis Club
Contact: Glen Potter, 824-3233
Mailing Address: 4080 24th St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114
Meetings: Lunch meetings Tuesdays at
noon. Speckmann's, Church and Duncan

Neighbors to Save Sanchez Hilltop
Message phone: 647-9980
Mailing Address: 3726 21st St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114

Noe Valley Democratic Club
Contact: Dave Monks, 821-4087
Mailing Address: 1652 Dolores St., #6,
San Francisco, CA 94110
Meetings: Second Wednesday of month,
7 p.m.; call for specifics.

**Noe Valley Merchants and Professionals
Association**
Contact: J. P. Gillen, Little Italy, 821-1515
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 460574,
San Francisco, CA 94114
Meetings: Last Wednesday of month, Bank
of America, 24th & Castro, 9 a.m.

Noe Valley Senior Center
Call 648-1030 for lunch reservations.
Mailing Address: 1021 Sanchez St.,
San Francisco, CA 94114
Meetings: Monday through Friday for lunch
(donation \$1.25), Noe Valley Ministry,
1021 Sanchez St., 12:30 p.m.

Outer Noe Valley Merchants
Contact: Jim Appenrodt, 641-1500
Mailing Address: 284 29th St.,
San Francisco, CA 94131
Meetings: First Monday of month, St. Paul's
Church cafeteria, 3 p.m.

Upper Noe Neighbors
Contact: Janice Gendreau, 641-5989
Mailing Address: 403 28th St.,
San Francisco, CA 94131
Meetings: Every other month, Upper Noe
Rec Center, Day & Sanchez. Call for specifics.

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Garbage Bins in the Wind: 20th Street residents and other hill dwellers returning home from work can play mix and match trashcans with their neighbors. Photo by Pamela Gerard

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Abandoned Cars.....781-5865
Curb Painting.....554-2336
DPW (24-hour emergency).....695-2020
Graffiti Removal.....241-WASH
Hazardous Spills (on street).....911
Hazardous Waste Hotline.....554-4333
Illegal Parking.....553-1200
Mayor's Office.....554-7111
Noise (construction related).....558-6096
Noise (nuisance—police).....553-1012
Parking Meters (out of order).....550-2739
Parking Permits (residential).....554-5000
San Francisco Beautiful.....421-2608
Sidewalk Inspection.....554-5797
Street Cleaning (to remove illegally dumped items or garbage).....695-2017
Streetlights (out of order).....554-0730
Street Signs.....554-9780
Towed Cars (to retrieve).....553-1235
Traffic Signals (out of order).....550-2736
Water Dept. (street breaks).....550-4911

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Animal Care and Control.....554-6364
Child Abuse Reporting.....1-800-856-5553
or 558-2650
Community Boards
(dispute mediation service).....863-6100

Community United Against Violence (CUAV).....777-5500 or 333-HELP
Drug Information Hotline..1-800-879-2772
Elder Abuse Hotline.....557-5230
Fire (non-emergency).....861-8000
Poison Control Center.....1-800-523-2222
Police/Fire Emergency.....911
Police (non-emergency).....553-0123
San Francisco SAFE.....553-1984
S.F. Women Against Rape.....647-7273
Suicide & Crisis Line.....781-0500
WOMAN, Inc. (24-hour domestic violence hotline).....864-4722

HOME

Building Inspection.....558-6087
Electrical Inspection.....558-6030
Pacific Bell.....611
PG&E.....1-800-743-5000
Plumbing Inspection.....558-6054
Sunset Scavenger.....330-1300
Viacom Cable.....863-9600
Water Dept. (home emergencies) 923-2400

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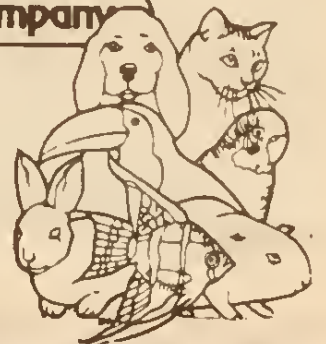
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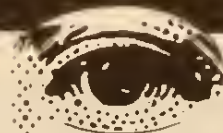
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The Moon's Light breaks through the clouds for a moment, mirroring a Valley Street night owl's front room incandescence
Photo by Najib Joe Hakim

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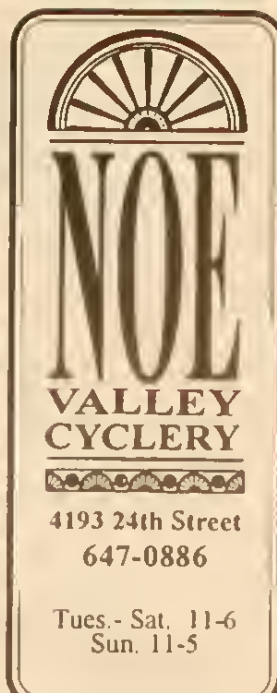
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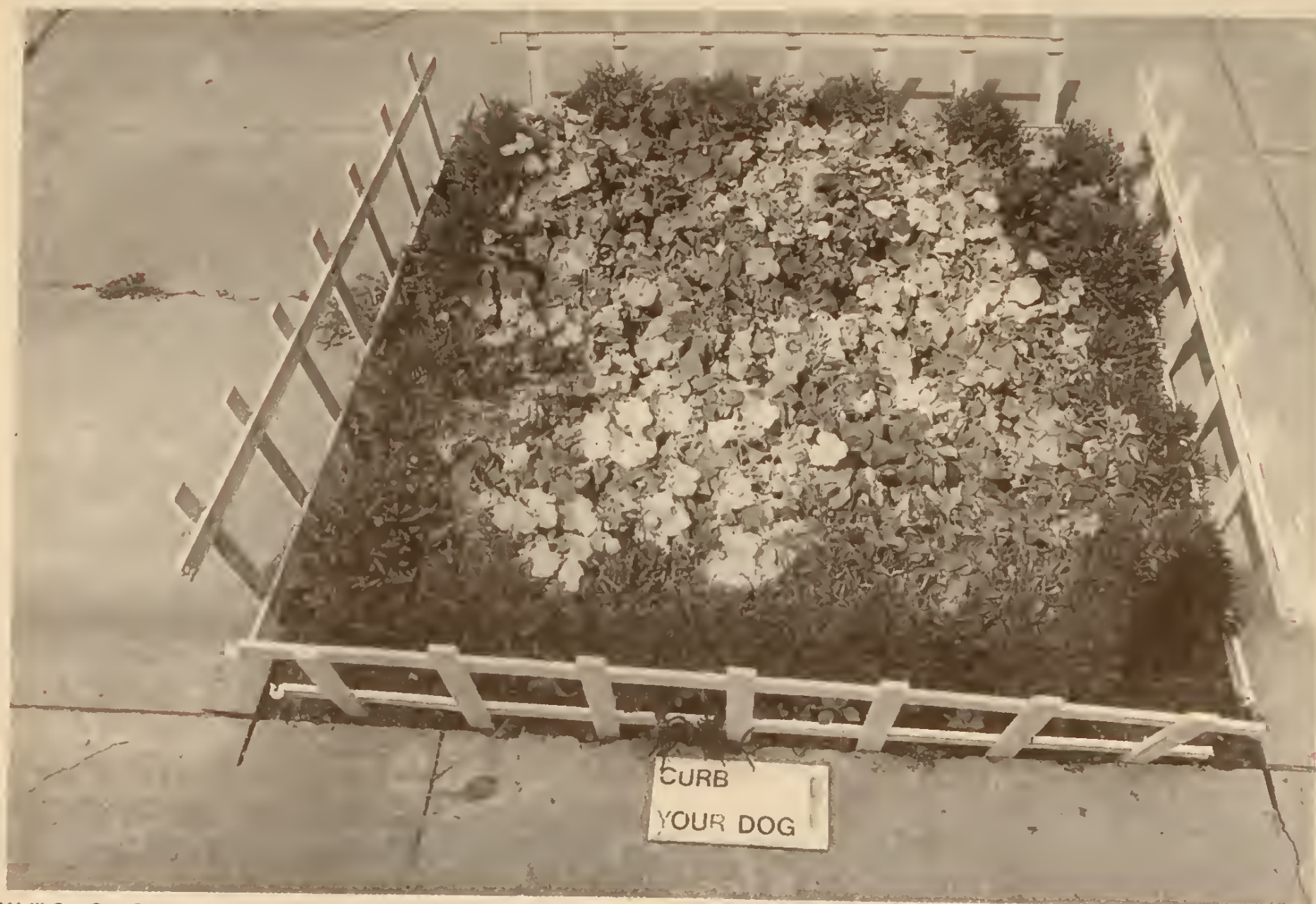
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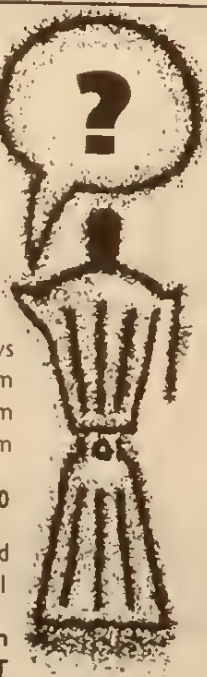
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Illustration by Karol Borske

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The Colors of the Day were those of the many rainbow flags like this one on Noe near 24th Street during Gay Pride Month in June.
Photo by Beverly Thorp

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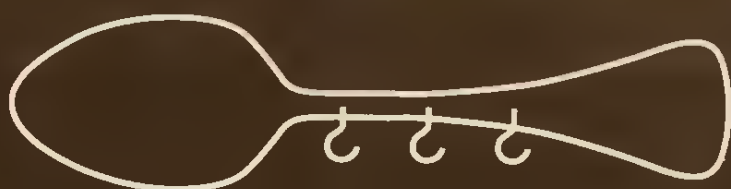
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AND A

BEAUTIFUL

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OUT OF HAND
Contemporary American Crafts
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It's 7 a.m. on Chattanooga Street and a rider's conveyance waits in the shortening shadows. Oh, moped of the morning, will you please bring them swiftly to their chosen destination?
Photo by Beverly Tharp



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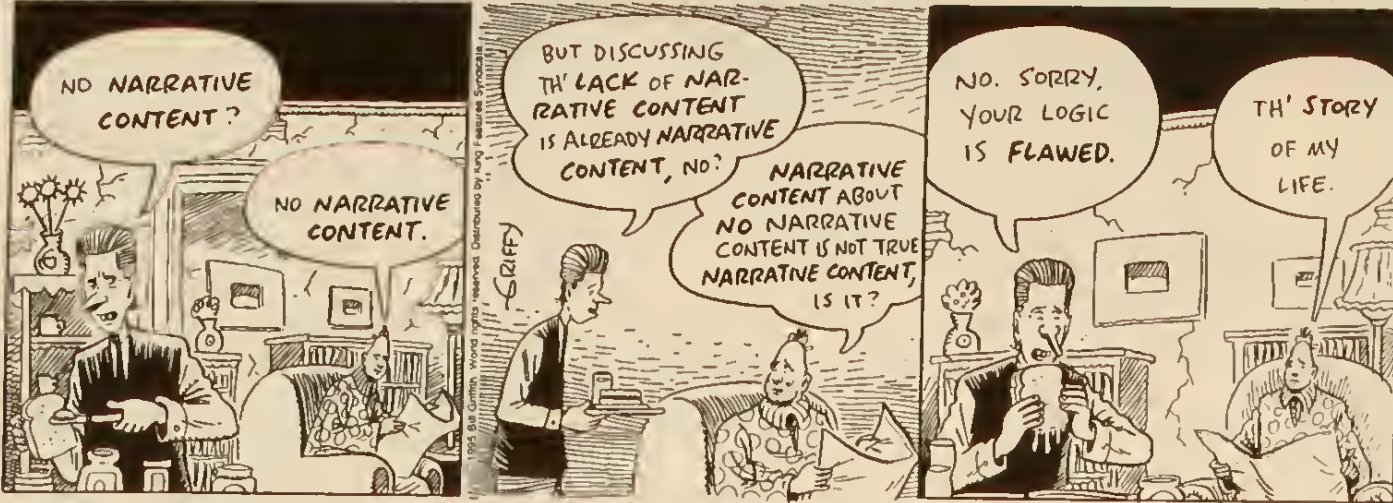
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ZIPPY

"NARRATION PROVIDED"

Bill Griffith



Let Bylines Be Bylines

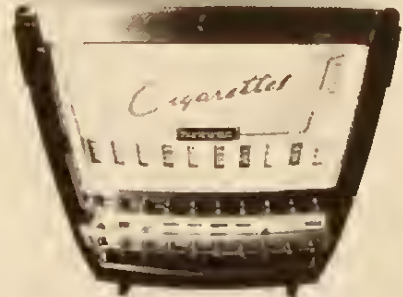
If you have written an opinion piece, a fond remembrance, or a profile of a neighborhood character, maybe it's time you had it published in the *Voice*. We welcome submissions of first-person reflections, particularly those relating to Noe Valley people, pastimes, politics, or pets. Please mail your manuscript (which should be typed, double-spaced, and fewer than 1,000 words) to the *Noe Valley Voice*, 1021 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 94114. We'd appreciate it if you'd include a phone number. Thanks. ☐

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Delivery & Pickup 647-1664

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in Mylene's Full Service Salon



Calendar Is Coming Back In September

Fresh from a few weeks in Chicago (where it was actually cooler), the Calendar crew is ready to help you feature your nearby Noe Valley events in the centerspread of our September issue. Just get your items in the mail by Aug. 15. And if you've got a good photo print, send that also to the *Noe Valley Voice* Calendar, 1021 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 94114.

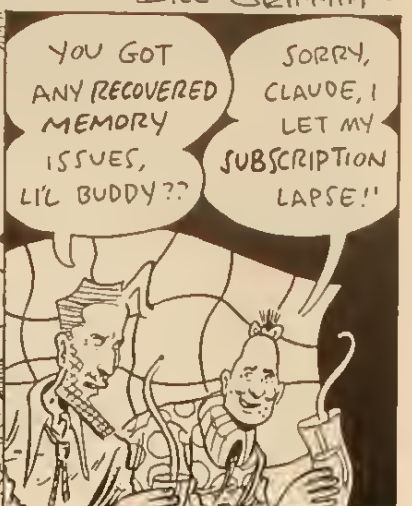
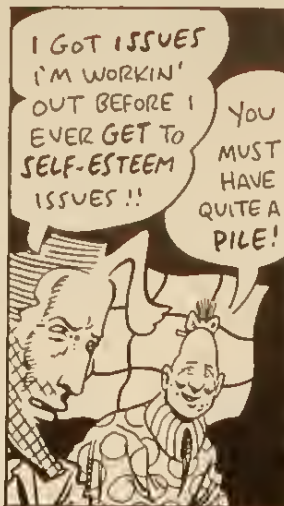
If you have questions, or last-minute changes, please call Calendar Editor Karol Barske at 285-6347.

Note that space is limited, and Noe Valley items take priority. Those that make the cut will be on the streets starting Wednesday, Aug. 28. Thank you.

ZIPPY

"BIG SAVINGS OFF NEWSSTAND PRICE"

Bill Griffith



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2072

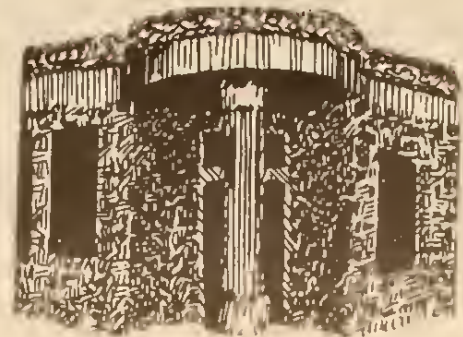
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FOOD TO GO

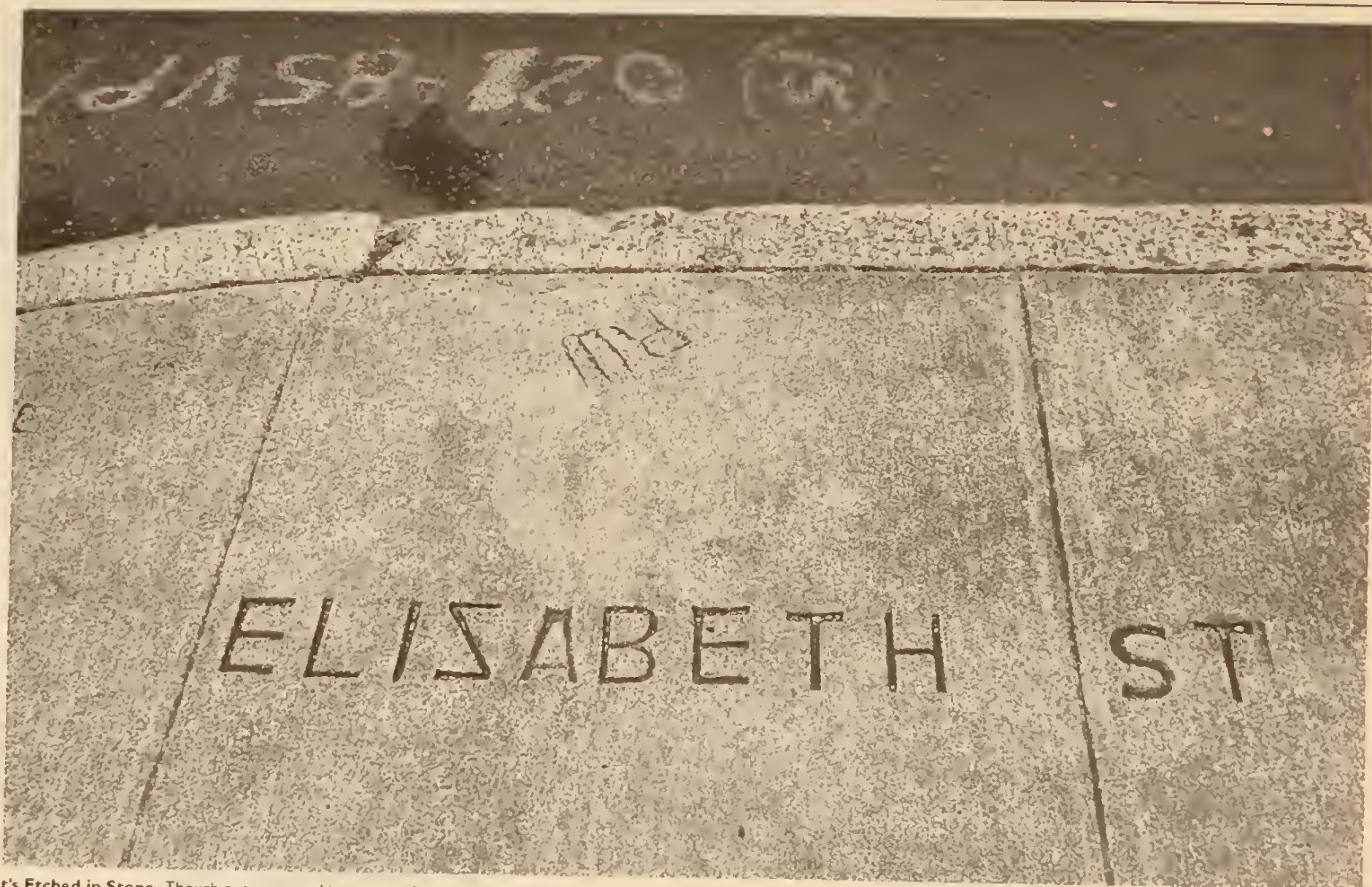
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Our special during weekdays—2 eggs & homemade fries \$2.15

Try our Fruit Pancakes and Waffles • Omelettes are our Specialty

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Mon.–Fri. 6:30–2:00 p.m. Sat. 7:30–2:00 p.m. Sun. 8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.



It's Etched in Stone. Though not ancient, this section of Noe Valley pavement bears the mark of many travelers: the creative misspellers at the Department of Public Works, the owner of the fabled "RWV"—a '60s-model Chevrolet—and, of course, a chalker from PG&E. Photo by Leo Holub

Noe Valley Services

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Since 1977 we've been offering
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If you haven't tried to advertise
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it's time to check it out.

Though camera-ready art prepared
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using the highest-quality design,
typesetting, and graphics, to get it
noticed and read, for prices that
are quite competitive.

Quick, friendly service from our
ads staff will get you started, even
if you've never advertised in print
before. Illustration, photography,
and design can also be arranged
to add the final touches to your
presentation in these pages.

To get started, call Steve at
239-1114

and if you'd like to be featured in
our new section, the
Glen Park pages, call Jane at
550-1991.

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Low Rates • Excellent References

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The Voice is not responsible
for the services of these
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FREE ESTIMATES



First Holy Communion is a serious business to these youngsters preparing to enter St. Paul's on Church Street last spring.

Photo by Najib Joe Hakim

Noe Valley Services

Class Ads—You'll See Them in September

The September 1996 issue of the *Noe Valley Voice* will see a return of Class Ads, our least expensive and most popular form of advertising, at 25¢ a word.

The procedure is simple: Just type or print the text of your ad, multiply the number of words by 25¢ (we trust you), enclose a check or money order for the full amount, and mail it to us by the 15th of the month preceding the month in which you'd like the ad to appear. Please let us know whether your ad is a renewal from a previous issue. But be sure to give us the full ad copy, in any case.

Reward for Loyalty: The *Voice* prints a news edition 10 months a year, distributed on or before the first day of the month. (Our August Literary Issue does not contain Class Ads.) There is no January issue, because December is our vacation month.

If you decide to place the same class ad in 10 issues—a year's worth—you are entitled to a 10 percent discount. When figuring your cost, deduct 10 percent from the total due for 10 issues.

The next *Voice* will be the September 1996 issue, to be delivered to Downtown Noe Valley on Wednesday, Aug. 28. To place a Class Ad, mail your ad copy and a check, payable to the *Noe Valley Voice*, so that we receive it by Aug. 15.

The address is *Noe Valley Voice* Class Ads, 1021 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 94114. Sorry, but we are unable to accept phone orders.

Class advertisers should keep in mind that only the first few words of the ad (not to exceed one line of type) will be set in boldface type. Also, receipts and tear sheets will be provided only if your order is accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thank you.



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Pager: 202-6572

ALL WOMEN CREW
THE PAINTING
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Fine Painting

Interior/Exterior • Since 1980
Meticulous • Neat • Reliable • Affordable
"With a female sense of detail and cooperation"

Local References • Free Estimates
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\$35 - 1 hour

Silvie Sareil, CMT/CST
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Matched to Your Criteria by Phone...24 hrs
Effective • Confidential • Straight & Gay

"It was wildly successful!" — M K

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Free 24-Hr Recorded Information

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in Noe Valley

• Beautiful Suite
• Private Entrance
• Delicious Fare
• Victorian Charm
• Reasonable
Rates



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THE LAST PAGE



One Look Back, and you wonder why you're leaving Noe Valley. There'll be pruning and clearing to do soon—in the fall, and that fence needs mending. Times were good here and there was always work. But it's time to move on—to carve another door and step through a different doorway.

Photo by Pomelo Gerard



GRAND OPENING: -----T-H-E-----N-E-W----- **Courtyard Cafe**

1361 Church Street (at Clipper)

UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

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Serving Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Dine on our outdoor patio

Ask about private parties – birthdays, anniversaries, weddings –
in our sheltered patio or private room – seating up to 45
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in the morning * Homemade pancakes, fritattas,
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Buy 1 entree – breakfast, lunch or dinner – &
receive a 2nd entree of equal or lesser value FREE!

Open 8:30 am – 10 pm, Monday–Saturday
8:30 am – 4:30 pm Sundays

* * * * * Noe Valley's best kept secret * * * * * 641-0678 * * * * *